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KUWAIT JOINS WIDE CONDEMNATION OF QURAN DESECRATION



An Iraqi throws a stone during clashes with security forces in front of the Swedish embassy in Baghdad, Iraq, Thursday, July 20, 2023. The protest was in response to the burning of the Holy Quran in Sweden. (AP)



A protester throws an egg at the Swedish Embassy in Tehran, Iran, in a protest against Sweden after the Nordic nation allowed an Iraqi man to desecrate the Holy Quran, Friday, July 21, 2023. (AP)

Protesters try to storm Green Zone

Thousands in Muslim-majority countries take to the streets

BAGHDAD, July 22, (Agencies): Tensions flared again in Iraq Saturday over a series of recent protests in Europe involving desecration of the Quran, Islam's holy book, which have sparked a debate over the balance between freedom of speech and religious sensitivities.

Hundreds of protesters attempted to storm Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone, which houses foreign embassies and the seat of Iraq's government, early Saturday following reports that an ultranationalist group burned

a copy of the Quran in front of the Iraqi Embassy in the Danish capital, Copenhagen.

The protest came two days after people angered by the planned burning of the Islamic holy book in Sweden stormed the Swedish Embassy in Baghdad.

Security forces on Saturday pushed back protesters, who blocked the Jumhuriya bridge leading to the Green Zone, preventing them from reaching the Danish Embassy.

In Kuwait, Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Friday voiced Kuwait's emphatic condemnation and denunciation of the insulting of the Holy Quran by an extremist for the second time in Sweden.

The minister, in a press statement, warned that such repeated practices would provoke the sentiments of Muslims, especially as they coincide with their celebration of New Hijri Year.

He also held the Swedish side fully responsible for the rampancy of such acts that fuel the discourses of hatred against Muslims and incite violence, especially as this incident was repeated by the same person within a short period of time.

In the light of this condemnable act, Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah underlined that the State of Kuwait was currently consulting and coordinating with Gulf, Arab and Muslim countries to convene an emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in a bid to take concrete and practical steps to thwart the recurrence of such unacceptable acts.

The minister, further, called upon the international community to decry the discourse of hatred, exert efforts to establish the values of tolerance and respect of religions, and to enact laws and legislation that denounce and prohibit blasphemy.

Elsewhere in Iraq, protesters burned three caravans belonging to a demining project run by the Danish Refugee Council, or DRC, in the city of Basra in the south, local police said in a statement. The fire was extinguished by civil defense responders, and there were "no human casualties, only material losses," the statement said.

The DRC confirmed in an emailed statement to The Associated Press that its premises in Basra "came under armed attack" early Saturday.

"We deplore this attack - aid workers should never be a target of violence," Lulu Thapa, DRC's executive director for the Middle East said.

Iraq's prime minister has cut diplomatic ties with Sweden in protest over the desecration of the Quran in that country.

Condemned

In a statement on Saturday, the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned "in strong and repeated terms, the incident of abuse against the Holy Quran and the flag of the Republic of Iraq in front of the Iraqi Embassy in Denmark."

It called the international community "to stand urgently and responsibly towards these atrocities that violate social peace and coexistence around the world," the statement read.

Thousands of people took to the streets in a handful of Muslim-majority countries Friday to express their outrage at the desecration of a copy of the Quran in Sweden, a day after protesters stormed the country's embassy in Iraq.

The protests in Iraq, Lebanon and Iran that followed weekly prayers were controlled and peaceful, in contrast to scenes in Baghdad on Thursday, when demonstrators occupied the Swedish Embassy compound for several hours and set a small fire.

The embassy staff had been evacuated before the storming, and Swedish news agency TT reported that they were relocated to Stockholm for security reasons.

For Muslims, any desecration of the Quran, their holy text, is abhorrent.

The Jordanian Foreign Ministry on Saturday denounced the burning of a copy of the Holy Quran by extremists in the Danish capital, Copenhagen, on Friday.

The ministry said, in a press release, that this marks an act of hatred and Islamophobia that incites violence and disrespects religions.

It underlined its disapproval and condemnation of these irresponsible acts and behavior that provoke Muslims' sentiments, fuel hatred and put peaceful coexistence into jeopardy.

The ministry, further, emphasized that the recurrence of such racist acts and behavior requires the international community to muster efforts to address and prevent them and to enact laws that criminalize and ban the desecration of religious symbols and sanctities.

The UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned the Charge D'Affaires of the Swedish Embassy on Friday to hand her a protest note over the repeated desecration of the Holy Quran in Stockholm.

The UAE strongly condemned the decision of the Swedish government to continue to allow such acts to occur, according to a statement from the ministry carried by the UAE news agency (WAM).

The UAE stressed that Sweden has disregarded its international responsibilities and demonstrated a lack of respect for social values in this regard.

The Ministry emphasised the importance of monitoring hate speech and expressions of racism that negatively impact peace and security.

It expressed its rejection of the use of freedom of expression as justification for such heinous acts, according to the statement.

The Ministry underscored the UAE's rejection of all practices aimed at undermining security and stability in contravention of human values and principles.

It reaffirmed that hate speech and extremism contradict international efforts to spread the values of tolerance, coexistence and peace between peoples.

The Ministry underscored that the allowance of such heinous acts contradicts international norms and laws that prevent attacks on religions and religious symbols, and that hate speech and extremism contribute to the outbreak, escalation and recurrence of conflict worldwide.

NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: The Kuwaiti government will submit a bill on parliamentary election and establishing a national body for the high electoral commission to the National Assembly on Sunday, the Center for Government Communication (CGC) said Saturday.

On its Twitter account, the CGC said this came in line with cooperation and an agreement reached at the government-parliamentary coordination committee. (KUNA)

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ABU DHABI: World Health Organization commended on Thursday the procedures taken by Kuwait in facing and containing the Coronavirus (COVID-19), of which was the halting of business-related activities alongside checking and examining all inbound workers.

WHO Representative in Egypt Dr. Naïma Al-Qasseer acclaimed these efforts in statements to KUNA on the sidelines of the 34th International Nursing Research Conference held in Abu Dhabi (ADNEC) which will last for two more days. (KUNA)

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KUWAIT CITY: The power load index recorded a maximum of 15,930 megawatts at 2:30 pm on Friday as temperatures keep on rising – 70 megawatts higher than Thursday's consumption of 15,860 megawatts, reports Al-Anba daily.

The minimum power consumption reached 12,170 at 6:00 am Friday. The maximum consumption on Friday is lower than the highest recorded on Monday – 16,370 megawatts.

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KUWAIT CITY: The country's electric power deficit over the next three years will gradually increase, reaching its peak in September 2026, with a total of 1,636 megawatts, reports Al-Jarida daily quoting a government report.

The report said the deficit during July, August and September 2023 will peak at 645 MW in September, and that the total deficit in electric power next year 2024 during the summer months, starting from June to September, will peak at 1331 MW in September.

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KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent two cables of condolences Friday to Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani and Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani on the demise of Sheikh Mohammad bin Hamad bin Abdullah Al-Thani.

In the cables, His Highness the Amir prayed to Allah Almighty to bestow his mercy upon the soul of Sheikh Mohammad and bring solace to the ruling family of Qatar.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent two cables of condolences Friday to Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani and Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani on the demise of Sheikh Mohammad bin Hamad bin Abdullah Al-Thani. (KUNA)

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BRUSSELS: The European Union Thursday announced a new framework for sanctions on Iran in view of its military support to Russia's war against Ukraine.

This new framework prohibits the export from the EU to Iran of components used in the construction of drones, said an EU Council statement.

The sanctions provide for travel restrictions and asset freeze measures that could be imposed against persons responsible for, supporting or involved in Iran's drone programme. (KUNA)

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BRUSSELS: The European Union Foreign Affairs Council Thursday decided to extend the framework for imposing targeted sanctions to address the situation in Lebanon for an additional year, until 31 July 2024.

This framework, originally adopted on 30 July 2021, provides the possibility of imposing sanctions against persons and entities who are responsible for undermining democracy or the rule of law in Lebanon, said the Council in a statement. (KUNA)



Bahrain Foreign Minister Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid al-Zayani, (left), speaks during a meeting with Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Thursday, July 20, 2023 at the State Department in Washington. (AP)

MSF team attacked in Sudan; WFP official killed in Yemen

CAIRO, July 22, (AP): Armed men attacked an 18-member team of Doctors Without Borders working at a key hospital in Sudan's war-torn capital of Khartoum, the aid group said Friday.

The MSF medical team was stopped on the road on Thursday while transporting supplies to the Turkish Hospital, located in the district of South Khartoum, the aid group said. The armed men first questioned the MSF team about why it was in Sudan, then started beating some of them.

"After arguing about the reasons for MSF's presence, the armed men aggressively assaulted our team, physically beating and whipping them," the group said on its website.

One of the drivers was briefly detained, MSF added. The group did not say whether the attackers were in uniform or provide other details.

Sudan has been rocked by violence since mid-April, when tensions between the country's military, led by Gen. Abdel Fattah Burhan, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, commanded by Gen. Mohamed Hamden Dagalo, burst into open fighting.

The conflict has since spread to several parts of the country, reducing Khartoum to an urban battlefield, and has also fueled ethnic violence in Sudan's western Darfur region.

The clashes have killed more than 3,000 people and wounded more than 6,000 others, according to June figures from the Sudanese government. However, the real toll is likely much higher, doctors and activists say. Over 3 million people have been displaced within Sudan or have fled the country to escape the violence, according to the International Organization for Migration.

Thursday's attack has prompted MSF to consider whether it can stay on at the Turkish Hospital, which has served as a base for the group's aid efforts in Sudan. According to MSF, it is also one of the only two hospitals still functioning in the Sudanese capital.

"The MSF is becoming seriously con-

cerned that our presence in the Turkish Hospital will soon no longer be tenable," MSF said, in a post on twitter.

On streets of Khartoum, the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces appears to have the upper hand. Over the past three months, its forces have occupied people's houses and other civilian properties, according to residents and activists, and turned them into operational bases.

The Sudanese army has responded with airstrikes and shelling of densely populated civilian areas.

There have also been reports of widespread destruction and looting across Khartoum and the nearby city of Omdurman. Humanitarian facilities have often been targeted. At least two World Food Program sites have been looted, the U.N. agency said, one in Khartoum and the other in the central city of El Obeid.

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CAIRO: Yemeni police on Saturday arrested two suspects in the killing of a senior World Food Program official the previous day, authorities said.

Ten others were also detained for their alleged involvement in the killing of Moayad Hameidi, who had recently arrived in the country to take the post of the head of the World Food Program in the southwestern province of Taiz.

Taiz police did not provide further details.

On Friday, two gunmen riding on a motorbike shot Hameidi in the town of Turbah. He died shortly after reaching a hospital. The attackers fled the scene.

Hameidi, a Jordanian, was the latest aid worker to be killed in Yemen, which has been embroiled in a civil war since 2014. He had just arrived in Taiz a few days ago to assume his role as head of the WFP office in the province.

"The loss of our colleague is a profound tragedy for our organization and the humanitarian community," said Richard Ragan, WFP's director in Yemen. "Any loss of life in humanitarian service is an unacceptable tragedy."

Turkiye ties for upgrade

ISTANBUL, July 22, (Agencies): Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Friday his country was strengthening cooperation with the Arabian Gulf countries which would reward the Turkish economy.

"We agreed on the continuation of our consultation and coordination on regional issues. Regional issues should be addressed through regional co-operation," Turkiye's Anadolu Agency quoted him.

President Erdogan was speaking to reporters aboard the presidential plane while returning from a trip that took him to three Gulf countries - Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

Turkiye's relations with Saudi Arabia have entered a new era with the signing of five win-win agreements, including the biggest defense and aerospace export contracts in Turkiye's history," he noted.

On the visit to Doha, Erdogan said Turkiye and Qatar marked the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, adding that he agreed with Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani to further extend "excellent" cooperation in various fields.

Dealing with his visit to the UAE, Erdogan said Ankara and Abu Dhabi signed a total of 13 deals worth USD 50.7 billion.

There is a substantial potential between Turkiye and the UAE in the areas of trade and investment, Erdogan said.

"With the joint agreement we signed, we have raised our relations to the level of a strategic partnership," he stated.

"We established a high-level strategic council mechanism. With the establishment of the mechanism, we have provided a platform where we can discuss issues on our agenda at the highest level," he went on.

"All these agreements, beyond their monetary rewards, are signs of the Gulf countries' trust in Turkiye's economy and industry," he added.

Meanwhile, Erdogan on Thursday didn't rule out reviving deadlocked negotiations to resolve Cyprus' nearly 50-year ethnic division, but again rejected any deal that wouldn't offer Turkish Cypriots a state of their own.

That position stands against a United Nations-sanctioned framework envisioning a federated island nation.

Speaking at celebrations in the breakaway Turkish Cypriot north on the 49th anniversary of a Turkish invasion that split the island along ethnic lines, Erdogan again poured cold water on Greek Cypriot hopes of forming a federation composed of Greek and Turkish speaking zones as has been the aim of talks for decades.

Prayer Timings			
Fajr	03:31	Asr	15:29
Sunrise ..	05:02	Maghrib ..	18:46
Zohr	11:54	Isha	20:15

Local

BIOMETRIC/FINGERPRINT APPOINTMENT: <https://meta.e.gov.kw/En/>

Study underway to reduce plastic waste: Mulholland

Most fish found in Kuwait waters polluted with plastic: UK expert

KUWAIT CITY, July 22: The British expert and the environmental attaché at the British Embassy in Kuwait Rachel Mulholland speaking on the Middle East affairs, warned of the danger of increasing plastic waste in Kuwait Bay and its impact on the marine environment and on the lives of consumers, reports Al-Qabas daily.

She said the fish of the Kuwait Sea are polluted with a large percentage of plastic, according to the latest environmental research study and working paper conducted by the British Center for Environmental Sciences, Fisheries and Aquaculture (CEFAS), in cooperation with the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research.

She went on to say that the sample that was taken from 8 types of the main fish consumed most in Kuwait, such as grouper, zubaidi, naqour, shim, mead, shrimp, crabs, along with other marine organisms, showed the presence of microplastic particles in the content of the digestive tract that are mainly consumed in Kuwait, warning of their dangers to marine life and their negative impact on humans as well.

The plastic waste, she added, takes a long time to decompose, which is a global problem, as plastic bottles take more than 450 years to decompose, which greatly threatens the marine environment. She explained that a lot of plastic waste, which comes from human waste on beaches or boats, ends up in the middle of the seas and oceans, affecting whales, birds and turtles, and harming the fish that feed on them and leading to their death, because of the toxic substances they carry.

It was based on a study stating that one fish in the waters of the Gulf contains 20 plastic particles, and this matter increases greatly in the seas and oceans as well, noting that 75% of the dead turtles in the waters of the Arabian Gulf fed on plastic, which affects all Gulf waters in the region.

Mulholland indicated her cooperation with many Kuwaiti authorities interested in the environment, including the Environment Public Authority and the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, in addition to working with the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, which is based in Kuwait.

She added, "We are currently working on knowing the sources of plastic particles and monitoring their expansion and finding appropriate strategies to reduce plastic waste, and protect the marine environment from human threats and encroachments."

She reviewed the challenges facing the Gulf marine environment, especially Kuwait, hinting that the challenges are similar in all parts of the world, but the Kuwaiti waters are the hottest and warmest, as the sea water temperature rises twice the global average, which affects the marine environment greatly, in addition to oil spills, sewage, industrial effluents and wrong human practices as a result of dumping waste on the beaches.

She revealed that the international treaty to combat environmental pollution resulting from plastic waste, which threatens global biodiversity, is scheduled to be signed be-

fore the end of this year, specifically in December 2023.

She stated that the United Nations Environment Program is working with member states from all over the world (including Kuwait), to develop an international legally binding instrument on reducing plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, by 2024.

She added: "Negotiations are underway to agree on this legally binding treaty, as the first negotiating meeting was held in November 2022, and the second meeting was held in June 2023, and the third negotiating meeting is scheduled to be held in December of this year, and after approval of the international treaty, sanctions will be imposed by each of the member states on individuals or violating entities."

The expert indicated that the British Center for Environmental Sciences, Fisheries and Aquaculture cooperates with many environmental bodies in the region, pointing to the tendency to include an environmental curriculum in the education curricula in primary and secondary schools in the Gulf countries, to educate students about the environment and climate change.

Mulholland mentioned that plastic is everywhere around us, but it harms fish, turtles and whales, and leads to their death on the beaches, as well as affecting birds, and when dissecting them, we discover that their intestines contain a large amount of plastic.

She added, "All of this does not mean that we should avoid eating fish, as seafood is a major component of the daily protein intake of the local population and residents of the Arab Gulf community, with an estimated average consumption rate of 109 grams per day per person."

Following are the highlights of the environmental study – plastic waste is one of the most dangerous marine pollutants, the temperature of the Kuwait Sea is twice the global average, the Kuwait Sea suffers from oil spills and sewage, harmful human activities negatively affect public health and plastic waste may affect the suitability of the sea for swimming

There are very few available studies that focus on West Asia and the Arabian Gulf, yet it is noted that this region is one of the highest producing regions of petrochemicals and plastic solid waste (PSW) in the world.

Good environmental steps include environment Public Authority initiatives to monitor beaches, monitoring environmental violations and awareness campaigns, recycling and rehabilitation of coastal areas and planting mangroves and restoring salt marshes

Recommendations to preserve the safety of the environment include collecting data on the sources of problems and monitoring them to address them and raising awareness and educating the community about the importance of protecting the environment.

This is in addition to recycling plastic waste and combating its danger and not throwing waste to protect fish and marine wealth and stimulate tourism

The British expert said, the environmental study was conducted on eight species of fish in Kuwait, which are of commercial importance to Kuwaitis and other Gulf countries, with the removal and dissection of the digestive system.

The study is the first major research activity, and the first of its kind, to provide evidence of the presence of microplastics in commercial domestic fish in Kuwait.



Plastic bottles thrown all over the place on one of the beaches in Kuwait.

‘Keep pace with new technology’

‘Need to upgrade work procedures’

KUWAIT CITY, July 22: The Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Communications Affairs Fahad Al-Shula stressed the need to "develop work methods in the municipality in a way that enhances and strengthens the oversight aspect, and at the same time keep pace with technological and modern regulatory means", reports Al-Rai daily.

He stressed that the accumulations of many years cannot vanish with just the press of a button especially since there is a huge number of violations that they are currently working on resolving in the right way.

Al-Shula said, "All the administrative decisions that were issued recently and those to be issued later are decisions that are consistent and complementary to each other. They are completely linked to the oversight role that the municipality is working on activating in the required manner."

He revealed that he held a meeting last week with the hygiene directors in the branches and safety departments of all governorates to develop their work mechanism.

Al-Shula also issued a ministerial decision to form a committee headed by the director general of Kuwait Municipality with seven of his deputies as members.

He stressed that the committee must sub-

mit a detailed study and proposals aimed at activating the oversight role of the municipality to achieve the highest levels of field control over the works and activities of the municipality, and to ensure the application of the provisions of the law and reduce violations.

In his decision, Al-Shula explained that the committee will review all legislation, bylaws, regulations, and decisions related to the municipality's activity in the field of cleaning work and monitoring construction work, as well as the violations of safety regulations, and encroachments on state property, in order to determine their adequacy and effectiveness in achieving the required field control, in addition to proposing a mechanism to address them and the necessary actions to be taken. This requires legislative amendments or the issuance of ministerial or administrative decisions.

One of the committee's tasks will be to review the mechanism currently in force in Kuwait Municipality both administratively and legally in the field of cleaning work, construction work, safety violations and encroachments on state property, and in light of the laws and regulating decisions to show the extent of the effectiveness of these procedures and their shortcomings, if any.

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Very hot with light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind with speeds of 15-42 km/h with a chance for rising dust over open areas and some high clouds will appear.

Weather

By Night: Hot to rather hot with light to moderate northwesterly wind with speeds of 12-35 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

Station
Kuwait City

Max Exp
49

Min Rec
36

Kuwait Airport	50	37
Abdaly	49	31
Jahra	50	35
Salmiyah	45	36
Ahmadi	45	38
Nuwaisib	47	33
Wafra	50	35

‘Nazaha’ participates in UN anti-graft meeting



The headquarters of the Bayt Mal Al-Quds Asharif Agency.

Bid to safeguard its identity

Kuwait's donation to Jerusalem agency is crucial for many tasks

By Mustafa Al-Muraini

RABAT, July 22, (KUNA): Bayt Mal Al-Quds Asharif Agency is a guardian of Jerusalem's identity and supporter of the Palestinians there in the face of occupation that plots to transform the holy city identity and erase its history.

Kuwait's financial contributions to the agency is crucial for performing its tasks of safeguarding Arab and Muslim rights in Jerusalem and supporting the Palestinian population there.

Salem Al-Sharqawi, the acting director general of the agency, told KUNA on Saturday that the Kuwaiti contribution boosts its action to preserve the spiritual and civic identity of Jerusalem and back the Palestinian populace, in the face of ongoing bids by the occupation forces to Judaize the city, alter its identity and force its inhabitants to flee it.

He noted that Kuwait contributed with USD one million in 2008 to fund projects supervised by the agency.

The agency, established in 1998 with an initiative by the late Moroccan King Al-Hassan II in his capacity as the chairperson of Jerusalem Committee, plays a crucial role in safeguarding Arab and Muslim rights in the sacred city and backing the natives through various social, cultural and economic ventures.

Such projects funded by the agency face the occupation authorities' conspiracies to Judaize the city and scratch off its Islamic identity.

The agency, supervised by King Mohammad the VI, is the executive arm of Jerusalem Committee, taking charge of protecting the city cultural heritage, maintaining its legal status

and religious manifestations.

Al-Sharqawi said in the interview with KUNA that the monarch's direct supervision over the agency constitutes a guarantee for it to pursue its tasks for serving the city and backing its stead fasting residents.

The agency, since 25 years ago, has executed 200 grand projects in addition to hundreds of small ventures, despite recurring security obstacles.

Al-Sharqawi said the occupation authorities' plots to alter the city identity are doomed to failure "because Jerusalem has always been a center for the human race civilization."

While expressing confidence that its residents would continue to stand firm against the Israeli conspiracies, he voiced concern at the current social and economic conditions; such a worrying situation that warrants Arab, Islamic and international action to back the sectors undermined by Tel Aviv's settlement policies.

Noting the necessity of sustainable funding for Jerusalem and its Palestinian populace, he underscored the State of Kuwait's contributions to the social ventures in Jerusalem including those executed by the agency.

Shedding light on some of the Jerusalem population needs, he said that they include construction of 20,000 residential units, 28 schools and 20 nurseries, in addition to medical equipment, cultural centers, stadiums, renovation of mosques and buildings particularly heritage sites.

He affirmed the agency's continuous need for donations and financial contributions in order to be able to proceed with its relief activities in Jerusalem.

Opposition grows

‘Leave balance funds insufficient’

KUWAIT CITY, July 22: With the increase in the parliamentary voices that criticize government agencies for spending about a billion dinars on "selling vacations" for employees despite the allocation of a budget of only KD 300 million, informed sources revealed that some ministries and government agencies deliberately made transfers between their budget items to secure the disbursement, while others requested for a financial boost from the Ministry of Finance, reports Al-Rai daily.

They explained that appropriating KD 300 million was not sufficient in the first place, as preliminary estimates indicated the need for about KD 481 million to meet the sale of 40 percent of the leave balance.

Selling the entire balance required more than KD 800 million at the time.

In light of the intensity of employee requests to sell their vacations, some ministries and government agencies resorted to transfers from within their budgets.

Others found it inevitable to re-

quest for a financial boost from the Ministry of Finance to cover them, which resulted in an increase in this volume of spending on vacation allowance.

The sources stressed that the financial boost fell under the clause of the fiscal compact with the ministries, adding that the Minister of Finance has the mandate that enables it to deal with requests for financial boosts for government agencies according to sufficient legal evidence.

Meanwhile, economic sources explained that the steps taken by the ministries and authorities have positive repercussions, because they saved the state more sums than were spent.

The sums due as leave balances will become more in the future with the expected increases under the "strategic alternative" included in the work program of the government, in the event that it was approved. Therefore, disposing of it according to the current salaries led to savings on the budget in the end.

KUWAIT CITY, July 22: According to informed sources, the Ministry of Social Affairs has finally received a response from the Fatwa and Legislation Department regarding its inquiry about the disbursement of shift allowances to some of the ministry's employees who are not in supervisory positions such as managers, observers, and heads of departments, or employees who are not working in the social care sector. It has authorized the disbursement process for non-supervisory job holders or workers in the care sector under the name of wages for work, provided that the controls and requirements regulating the issue are met, reports Aljarida daily.

They explained that the ministry, represented by the Financial and Administrative Affairs Sector, is in the process of addressing the Civil Service Commission (CSC) with the opinion of the Fatwa and Legislative Department to resume the process of disbursing the allowance that it suspended last April for all of its employees, with the exception of workers in the departments of the social care homes for the elderly, juveniles and family custody. This followed the increased observations and complaints against the ministry in this regard from five oversight bodies in the country, which recognized the illegality of continuing to grant the allowance, and demanded a refund of the amounts spent. These bodies are the State Audit Bureau, CSC, the Ministry of Finance, and two financial controllers, as well as the government performance follow-up agency.

The sources said, "The ministry is also in the process of addressing the State Audit Bureau, which indicated in its annual report that there are some observations and shortcomings during audits and appraisals of its work for the 2022/2023 fiscal year, most notably its disbursement of allowances to employees of departments that do not operate in the "shift" system, in violation of Civil Service Council resolution No. 12/2012 in order to avoid these observations after the bureau's approval of the employees' entitlement to the allowance.

Also, the Ministry of Social Affairs had taken a decision to stop the allowances in order to avoid increasing the registration of cases of abstention, by the Office of Financial Controllers, regarding the exchange, which are considered serious violations, as the office employees refused to approve, and then refunded them, especially in light of the unprecedented number of abstentions finally registered with the ministry."

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Nazaha at UN HQ: Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) participated in the fourth meeting of the global operational network of law enforcement authorities concerned with combating corruption, which was held at the United Nations headquarters in Vienna from July 10 to 13, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a press statement, the authority explained that the network is a platform for exchanging information between government authorities concerned with combating corruption. It is also required for providing the necessary knowledge, resources and tools to enhance international cooperation for the investigation of cross-border corruption crimes, under the umbrella of the United Nations Convention against Corruption and in coordination with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna.

The network is witnessing a continuous increase in the number of entities joining it as members from all over the world. Currently, the number has reached 161 entities concerned with enforcing anti-corruption laws from 91 countries that are party to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Also, many international organizations have joined the network as observers such as the European Union for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

The Nazaha delegation participated in many discussions and technical sessions aimed at enhancing methods and techniques for exchanging information and ways to use technology and innovation for preventing and combating corruption.

The delegation was briefed on the latest developments related to the network's work in preparing knowledge materials aimed at facilitating the exchange of information, including the encyclopedia of direct cooperation practices and the open source public records directory.

It also met with many counterpart bodies concerned with combating corruption to explore ways to enhance cooperation in the fields of preventing and combating corruption, in addition to following up on cross-border corruption cases and discussing ways to move forward in them.

Nazaha affirmed its constant endeavor to strengthen cooperation with countries and international organizations in order to eradicate the scourge of corruption and strengthen measures aimed at combating it through exchanging information on corruption crimes, sharing lessons learned, and the best practices in this field.

MEW gets CAPT approval to update control system

KUWAIT CITY, July 22: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy has obtained approval from the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) to sign a contract directly with an undisclosed company for updating the control system of the combined-cycle gas units (phase one) at the South Zour station for generating electricity and water distillation, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources revealed the value of the contract is KD10.4 million; while the implementation period is three years in accordance with clauses one, two and three of Article 18 of Public Tenders Law number 49/2016.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Electricity intends to float 22 tenders for the supply of spare parts for some pumps, update the control system, coupling connections for the main pumps, LED bulbs for lighting systems in the turbine hall building, metal connections of different sizes for the maintenance control workshop, oil pump for refrigerants and safety valves for distillers.

Sources said the deadline for submitting bids is on Sept 6, stressing the need to submit a certificate from Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry stating that the bidding company is registered for fiscal 2023/2024.

diwaniya

كيوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

‘Study vital regarding changing of commercial, economic landscape’

“WE previously followed the parliamentary deliberation of economic issues, including the privatization of public services, such as health and education and others, with the desire to raise their level of services and reduce the associated expenses under government administration,” columnist Dr. **Nada Suleiman Al-Mutawei** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

“I remember at the time that when the parliamentary efforts reached proposals that were closer to partial privatization, the decision swung between supporters and opponents without a critical and detailed reading of the project, and despite the MPs lacking knowledge of the economy, the parliamentary mood has recently undergone a change, and turned from adherence to the government apparatus as a provider of all services to a new phenomenon, which is the parliamentary acceptance of privatization, and sometimes even promoting it during sessions. What is the secret of this shift from refusing to give the private sector an opportunity to accepting privatization?

“Earlier we were accustomed to deputies having reservations about the decision that may terminate the work of the Kuwaiti, whether a woman or a man, and replace him with a parent company from abroad, which will start working according to foreign laws, and it may not be satisfied with the employment of local labor, and it may reject the idea of supporting labor. I was also surprised by the mood in favor of foreign institutions entering the labor market and voting on the issue so quickly.

“I expected and even wished that the deputies would demand the activation of the Studies Center in the Council to carry out a study of economic issues, including an opinion poll, and that the study would include the opinion of the Chamber of Commerce and the people who are well-versed in commerce and economists.

“As I mentioned earlier in my article, a good number of MPs in the National Assembly are specialized in subjects that are not related to trade and economics. And the younger ones, who later became involved in commercial work, entered the field of technology that did not need an agent.

“Last but not the least, the haste of the deputies in promoting what affects the economic scene needs a pause and study in terms of social, legal, cultural and other factors associated with changing the commercial and economic landscape.

“A final word: Drought affected crops in residential areas and public streets, and irrigation water stopped, despite repeated announcements by the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fisheries Resources (PAAAFR) to dis-



Dr Al-Mutawei

tribute free seedlings from time to time.

“This scene is enough to make the citizen question the seriousness of the state in implementing development plans, because neglecting the greening of spaces between residential areas is an indication of the public administration’s indifference to the general appearance of the state.”

Also:

“What is required of the government and members of the parliament is to work as statesmen, not as men of positions or elections, and to carry out a scientific study of all proposals in light of the supreme interest of the country, while looking at the impact of all these proposals on its future and the interest of children and grandchildren,” columnist **Ahmad Yaqoub Baqer** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

“The Budgets Committee noticed one of the defects of the so-called purchase of ‘earned annual leave’. The committee’s Rapporteur said: ‘The most important expenditure in the current budget is the salary item, which cost the State Treasury to 14.9 billion dinars, an increase of 14% over the previous year, and this is due to the government purchasing the earned leave which amounted to about half a billion dinars.’ The committee decided to refer this matter to the Audit Bureau and the need to control it.

“There is no doubt that it is a good awakening from the committee, even if it was late, because the defects of this decision were apparent in principle, as I and others wrote from the first day explaining the defects of this decision that harms public finances, harms the family, and reinforces the defects of the state’s administrative apparatus, as it contradicts the five-year plan and will lead to a reverse migration from the private sector to the public sector. Indeed, the penultimate report of Al-Shall refer to the exodus of national labor to the public sector based on the report of the Central Administration for Statistics.

“However, to be honest, the government alone is not responsible for this mistake, because the proposal was initially submitted by some deputies, but the government decided to issue it by a decree with some controls, which are that the sale be one month every two years, and that it be for Kuwaitis only, and that the employee should be worthy of it, but the Budgets Committee in the annulled Council 2022 insisted on canceling the controls, and the government unfortunately agreed, so the cost of this decree reached the amount indicated by the committee in the current Council.

“Today, the committee saw the need to set controls for the decree of selling or buying earned leave (whatever you may call it), and the committee may discover in the future other expenses that need controls as well, such as (wellness)

laws or others.

“Unfortunately, many of the actions of the government and the Council fall into such errors, which will eventually lead to the government apparatus being consumed with errors and high costs that will affect all the country’s facilities, especially since the rise in oil prices in the same proportion as the rise in expenditures is not guaranteed, rather it is very unlikely.”

□ □ □

“There have been much talk about the strategic alternative to the salary scale in the government, National Assembly, local newspapers and social media, but some are unfortunately causing confusion about it while others feed incorrect information,” columnist **Abdullah Abduljader** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

“Recently, the government released a statement on its commitment to implement the strategic alternative carefully with updates and a study which takes two years to complete. Doubt has been removed, while the objectives and method were explained to ensure fairness in salaries, and improve the performance of employees and the government.

“Kuwaitis working or want to be employed in the private sector should also get support by reviewing the labor subsidy, rates and jobs, as well as amending the Private Sector Labor Law to guarantee job security and stability for them.

“If the government wants to start studying the strategic alternative project now, it must lay down a plan, objectives, scope and information in agreement with the Assembly. Then, Kuwaitis with the qualifications and experience in the field must be sought from among the employees and retirees.

“Specialized work teams must be formed to study and implement the strategic alternative. The team must review and update the organizational and functional structures of government agencies, job descriptions, salaries and the standard of living. This is in addition to a legal team that will be tasked to review and update the Civil Service Law.

“Another team should design and update the automated system related to the strategic alternative. There should be a committee consisting of retired Kuwaiti consultants who shall supervise, follow up and review the outputs of the teams, provide advice and comments to achieve the objectives of this project.

“The objectives of the strategic alternative include a unified salary scale based on job evaluation and description, mechanism for evaluating job performance, allowances and bonuses according to the nature, importance and levels of work and assessment of job elements.”

— Compiled by Mai Elsoukary



Kuwait Fire Force photo
Firefighting squads working to extinguish a fire at Amghara scrapyard.

Amghara scrapyard fire tackled

Five firefighting teams, acting on information rushed to the Amghara scrapyard and put out the fire without causing any human casualties, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

The fire broke out in a warehouse containing highly flammable materials, oils, wood and building materials on approximately 2,000 square meters area.

The Public Relations and Media Department of the General Fire Force said the area was reduced to ashes while at the same time calling on the owners of factories, warehouses, industrial plots and commercial buildings to apply safety and fire prevention requirements and remove obstacles that may hamper the work of the firefighters.



Deported Filipinos heading home.

Decline in ‘runaway’ workers

700 Filipinos deported in 3 mths

KUWAIT CITY, July 22: About 700 Filipinos of both sexes were recently deported from Kuwait in about 3 months, at their expense or at the expense of their embassy in Kuwait which means the sponsors did not have to bear the cost of the air ticket which cost between 250 and 350 dinars each, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

The sources told the daily, that now there is a decline in the number of Filipino workers escaping from their employers, after the closure of the Philippines Embassy shelter because many of the runaways took advantage of the shelter, which was in built in violation of the law, due to flimsy reasons.

The daily added, these 500 Filipino workers were staying in the shelter rented by the embassy and were finally deported to Manila through the Deportation Center and about 130 of them are still in the government shelter center, because they have travel restrictions, most prominent of them are cases pending before the court, such as committing theft from the sponsor’s house or outstanding financial cases against them.

The sources said the steps taken by the Ministry of Interior contributed to lifting the injustice the sponsor was subjected to, since the absent worker did not abide by the years of work, according to the contract concluded between the worker and the sponsor.

In some cases the workers either pay for their own tickets or the embassy pays for them or else they will remain in detention.

Hearing now on Aug 15

KUWAIT CITY, July 22: The Criminal Court has postponed the murder case of Mubarak Al-Rashidi to August 15, while slapping a charge of pre-meditated murder against the suspect, reports **Al-Qabas** daily.

The Ministry of Interior had announced the decipherment of the mystery of the disappearance of the citizen Mubarak Al-Rashidi, weeks after his disappearance in the Subbiya neighborhood, where security men found his body inside a container in the Salmi area.

On May 26, the forensic evidence report showed that the body found in the container was that of the missing citizen, Al-Rashidi, and that he was killed, and his body was hidden inside a container in Salmi.

The investigations of the Ministry of Interior and its continuous efforts since the disappearance of the man revealed the details and circumstances of this heinous crime, and the investigations extended from Kuwait to Egypt in coordination and cooperation with the Egyptian security authorities in order to investigate the Egyptian accused who witnessed the crime inside a camp in the Kabad area, and helped transfer Al-Rashidi’s body to Al-Salmi desert.

Crackdown on ‘ration food’ thieves

Egyptian dead in fall; doctor assaulted

KUWAIT CITY, July 22: The concerned Kuwaiti authorities have been cracking down on the smuggling and trafficking of subsidized commodities and the recent raids on random markets in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Khaitan, and other areas resulted in the confiscation of large quantities of subsidized foodstuffs and referral of dozens of suspects to the Public Prosecution, reports **Al-Qabas** daily.

Sources told the daily the issue of smuggling ration items abroad and trading in them has more than one dimension. It involves the illegal transfer of subsidized commodities from those who deserve them into the hands of traffickers, who profit at the expense of public money.

The daily added, the state has allocated these commodities to Kuwaiti families and other deserving groups identified by the concerned authorities. When the suspects are caught, they face imprisonment, a fine, and deportation if the suspect is an expatriate.

The Supply Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has revealed that the total number of individuals benefiting from the cumulative ration until the first quarter of this year amounted to 2,240,000 people.

These individuals are distributed into six eligible categories and hold 257,000 ration cards. The figures, according to **Al Qabas**, estimated that subsidies for food commodities amounted to 52 million dinars in four months, in which last April witnessed an increase of 122% compared to the previous month in the value of basic materials, which even the Kuwaitis cannot take out of the country.

Kuwait spent 160 million dinars in support of materials provided to citizens, whether food or construction materials, in the first four months of this year. In addition, the value of food support is estimated at 13 million dinars per month, as the basic materials in the supply occupy the highest percentage of the materials spent and exceeds 30% per month.

Moreover, the eligible beneficiaries of subsidized goods are as follows – Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis, Gulf nationals residing in Kuwait (workers in government agencies); domestic workers working with eligible Kuwaiti families, Gulf nationals related by blood or affinity to any of the eligible groups and non-Kuwaitis (bedoun) registered with the Central Agency for Resolving the Status Illegal Residents.

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Egyptian dies in fall: An Egyptian died after allegedly falling from a scaffold in Salmiya. The Operations Department of the Ministry of Interior said after a report was received on the incident, police and paramedics rushed to the spot but could do nothing to save the man’s life, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

The man allegedly lost his balance and fell from a building that was being renovated, according to the testimony of his colleagues. The corpse of the victim has been referred to Forensics.

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Doctor assaulted: An unidentified doctor was attacked by a visitor at a Jaber Al-Ahmad City clinic, reports **Al Qabas** daily.

The incident happened when the doctor at the clinic refused to grant the visitor a sick leave because his data did not match the data in the doctor’s computer system based on strict instructions for doctors to verify the data of anyone who requests for a medical examination.

At this point the visitor, who has not been identified, allegedly lost his temper and beat the doctor.

The daily said the doctor has filed a complaint with the police and reported the incident to the Ministry of Health.

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Illegals at printing job: The General Department of Residence Affairs Investigation during a campaign against printing and photocopying vehicles has impounded eight vehicles and arrested 13 violators of the residence and labor law for misusing municipal website licenses, reports **Al Jarida** daily.

The department also issued 9 violations for persons operating a work center without permit. Moreover, the Ministry of Interior also confirmed that it has provided transaction forms for service departments on its website for the benefit of everyone.



Subsidized foodstuffs seized in a warehouse during crackdown.

39 illegal aliens nabbed

16 caught running gambling den

KUWAIT CITY, July 22: The General Department of Criminal Investigation from the Farwaniya Governorate Investigation Department, has arrested 16 people of Asian nationality for running a gambling den, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

The Public Relations and Security Media Department of the Directorate-General of Drugs Control said in another incident six Arabs were arrested for possessing and trafficking narcotics.

The security sources pointed out that this comes within the framework of the efforts of the criminal security sector to spread and implement security campaigns in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh to control the security situation and the outlaws.

The sources stated all the arrested persons have been referred to the concerned authorities.

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Illegal aliens held: The Ministry of the Interior announced that a campaign by the General Department of Residence Affairs Investigation resulted in the arrest of 39 violators of the residence and labor law of

various nationalities, in Farwaniya East and Bneid Al-Gar, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

The security sources added the campaign also resulted in the arrest of 3 people who were caught red-handed for begging for alms in in Farwaniya Governorate. All those arrested have been referred to the concerned authorities.

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Fake cop arrested: The Criminal Security Sector of the Ministry of Interior has arrested a Kuwaiti in his thirties for committing 18 thefts by impersonating police and robbing expatriates, most of whom did not resist because they did not want to confront a policeman and for fear of reprisals, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The man was also charged with stealing vehicles and selling parts after dismantling them from the vehicles. He was finally taken into custody after he was caught red-handed while attempting to break into a shop.

The suspect was reportedly identified by some of the victims during a police identification parade and handed over to the Public Prosecution

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Training course eyed for ministers & officials over ‘Tawasul’ launch

Hydrogen unit tender of Al-Zour refinery delayed

KUWAIT CITY, July 22: The government will soon conduct a training course for ministers and officials in preparation for the launching of ‘Tawasul’ — an online platform for receiving the complaints, suggestions and inquiries of citizens and expatriates

and it is linked with 72 government agencies, reports Al-Rai daily quoting sources from the government. Sources confirmed that His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah is following up the project, which aims to open communication lines and bridges of trust with citizens and expatriates.



A school funded by Kuwait charity in Baddawy in North Lebanonn.

KUNA photo

Kuwaiti charitable schools in Lebanon keen to guarantee education for Syrian refugees

BEIRUT, July 22, (KUNA): Kuwait charity schools in North Lebanon contributes to providing Syrian students with educational curricula that guarantee them the ability to face difficulties of life. These schools, located in Tripoli, Dannieh and Akkar in northern Lebanon, cover the basic, intermediate and secondary educational stages, with nearly 7,000 students. The Kuwait charitable schools include 11 schools sponsored by the Kuwaiti Humanitarian Excellence Association, while the International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) supports five schools that sponsor 640 orphans. In a statement to KUNA, the Director of the Cultural Center for Specific Education at the

Association Mustafa Alloush said that donations are made through funders, whether they are individuals, organizations or associations. The association provides the necessary school buildings and sponsors distinguished students to enable them to continue their studies, he noted. Both Humanitarian Excellence Association and the International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) cooperated in establishing a learning difficulties program and integrated it into the educational curricula. The program is based on the idea of building academic and psychological compensatory programs in emergencies, aiming at qualifying teachers and reducing school dropouts.

Sources disclosed this is a continuation of the first training and it will include an explanation of the mechanism for using the platform, how to follow up complaints and requests, indicators of interaction and performance for each official, and the measures taken in this regard. Sources added the training date has yet to be specified, hinting it will happen soon.


Bids submission delayed: The MEED magazine said four companies are currently preparing to bid for a contract for a project to produce alternative raw materials for the hydrogen production unit at Al-Zour refinery, reports Al-Rai daily. The magazine quoting reliable sources from the Central Agency for Public Tenders said the deadline for submitting bids has been postponed from June 20 to Sept 24, noting that the scope of the contract includes engineering, procurement and construction works, in addition to work that covers pre-operation, start-up and quality testing. The companies vying for the project are Larsen & Toubro from India, the Chinese company Sinopec, and the local companies “Gulf Spic General Trading and Contracting and Hisco. MEED explained that only these companies attended the pre-tender meeting and purchased its documents, according to the sources, noting that the estimated budget for the project amounts to \$150 million, and it is expected that its completion will take 36 months.

HH Crown Prince, PM send greetings


HH the Amir congratulates Belgium on ‘National Day’

KUWAIT CITY, July 22, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has sent a congratulatory cable to King Philippe, the King of Belgians, on the occasion of his country’s National Day, wishing him well, and progress and prosperity to his country and people. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-

Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has sent a congratulatory cable to King Philippe, on his country’s National Day, wishing him good health and prosperity to his country and people. Also, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah has sent a congratulatory cable to King Philippe, on the occasion of his country’s National Day.



Guest
Mr KT Mathew
AlEssa Medical



with Host
Chaitali B Roy
Author / Broadcaster / Journalist



A show that celebrates India-Kuwait friendship

July 26th 2023
8 pm

Podcast on:
Chaitali B Roy

Sadaaqa poster

Sadaaqa presents KT Mathew

Sadaaqa, the show that documents and celebrates India Kuwait relationship by highlighting individual experiences presents the KT Mathew family of Kuwait on July 26. Mr KT Mathew is a pioneer in the field of Health Science, Education and Informatics in Kuwait. He and his wife Leelamma have a special story rooted in hard work, honesty, and enterprise. Both KT and Leelamma arrived in Kuwait in the 1950s. KT Mathew joined the Chest Diseases Hospital as Senior Staff to run the microbiology lab at the age of 27. He was employee number 49 Senior Staff at the Ministry of Health, one of the earliest expatriates to join the Ministry. He had a Fulbright Scholarship to Stanford & University of Chicago but didn't have the means to reach the States. He sought work in Kuwait to pay the family debts and save up his passage money, but fate had other things in store. In Kuwait, he met Leelamma, a young

Indian woman working as lab technician at KOC's Ahmadi Hospital.They got married - the first Orthodox Christian wedding to take place in Kuwait. The young couple began their journey together in a country that was starting to experience the effects of oil boom. In 1975, their lives changed tracks. They had begun their lives as professionals in Kuwait but in the mid-seventies, KT Mathew chose to get into business. Since then, there has been no looking back. Together with their children, Thomas, KO and Sunita, who are also exceptional leaders in their fields, the KT Mathew family have given Kuwait strong companies straddling different sectors, providing employment to hundreds of people and contributing to Kuwait's growth and development. Their remarkable contribution to Kuwait's health, education and Informatics sector will be showcased in this episode.

5 to 7 continuous days in sea

Union welcomes citizens to practice fishing profession

KUWAIT CITY, July 22: The head of the Kuwaiti Federation of Fishermen, Dhafer Al-Suwayyan, said the board of directors at the union has opened the door for every young and retired Kuwaiti, who is able to practice the artisanal fishing, reports Al-Jarida daily. He pointed out such fishing trips range between 5 and 7 continuous days in the sea. There are fishing licenses for grabs and there are a number of Kuwaitis who own fishing licenses but need laborers. Al-Suwayyan added, in today's statement, that the federation presented this in more than one statement, but no one came forward, hoping that a number of citizens

wishing to practice the fishing profession would apply to the federation. He pointed out that the federation will send a list of names to the concerned authority in order to obtain a fishing identity issued by it, provided that the fishing process is practiced during the entire shrimp fishing season for a period of 5 consecutive months, starting in August. He explained that the fishing profession does not have a monthly salary, but rather shares of the catch after a period of work, and after paying operating expenses and costs, maintenance work and the purchase of fishing equipment in each new season.

‘Need to facilitate all procedures’

MoF said okayed MoSA’s request over launch of wedding halls’ maintenance

KUWAIT CITY, July 22: In confirmation of the article about “the launch of the maintenance of wedding halls” that was published recently, informed sources said the Ministry of Finance has approved the request of the Ministry of Social Affairs to start the annual maintenance work of wedding halls at an estimated cost of KD 225,000 for all the halls in the six governorates for a period of six months, reports Aljarida daily. They said this step was taken after the Council of Ministers agreed to cancel its decision to convert the halls, which are run by the Ministry of Social Affairs, from private state properties to public properties belonging to the ministry. In detail, the Minister of Social Affairs, Family Affairs and Childhood Sheikh Firas Al-Saud, stressed the importance of completing work in the interest of all groups benefiting from the ministry’s services. **Mechanism** This was said in a press statement recently issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs, after the minister met with the ministry’s leaders to review the mechanism, its workflow, and its plans during the coming period. The minister insisted on the necessity of facilitating all procedures for clients, and ensuring that citizens’ needs are met. The minister directed the ministry’s leaders to exert efforts and proceed to complete

the digital transformation of the ministry’s services, and to work quickly towards facilitating the transactions for beneficiary citizens. According to the sources from the Ministry of Social Affairs, Minister Sheikh Firas was briefed on the various services offered by the ministry’s sectors, starting with cooperative societies, social care, community development, and other matters related to the legal sector, administrative and financial affairs. **Respond** The minister was keen to listen to the ministry’s leaders and direct them to respond to the instructions of the political leadership and the Council of Ministers. Regarding the maintenance of the wedding halls, the sources said, “Introducing hall maintenance work began after the Council of Ministers agreed to cancel its decision to convert the halls, which are managed and maintained by the Ministry of Social Affairs, from private state property to public property affiliated with the ministry. The Ministry of Social Affairs was assigned to coordinate with the Ministry of Finance regarding the use and management of the private halls. Halls to be maintained will include those that are not completely dilapidated or radically damaged, as well as those requiring simple maintenance that will allow the resumption of their use at the earliest.”



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Fruitful collaboration opens door for Kuwaiti entrepreneurs

Kuwait to join famous Bahraini ‘Beban’ TV Show in its third season

KUWAIT CITY, July 22: In addition to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman, and the United Arab Emirates, doors are now open for Kuwaiti entrepreneurs to join the entrepreneurship-themed reality television show ‘Beban’ produced by Bahrain-based Hope Ventures, the investment arm of Hope Fund, in its third season through a fruitful collaboration with Kuwaiti social entrepreneur, Ms. Riham Al Ayyar, Founder and CEO of Marketing Firm Philosophy.

Beban is centered around promising entrepreneurs as they pitch their existing businesses for equity investment and business development opportunities before a panel of regional investors of the private sector who can strategically accelerate the growth and expansion of these businesses to international markets.

Furthermore, Beban entrepreneurs will also benefit from the intensive training bootcamp they will undergo as part of the Beban journey to develop their businesses in various aspects like expansion planning, financial modeling, and pitching in front of a panel of regional investors on a televised show.

Commenting on the occasion, Ms. Riham Al Ayyar said: “Beban opening its doors to Kuwaiti entrepreneurs and potential investors will bring exponential exposure and lucrative opportunities to the entrepreneurial scene in the country. Excited to be supporting Beban’s journey in mobilizing its resources and fostering its financial patronization from Kuwait. Maximizing Kuwait’s position in this valuable show will definitely make a significant impact on the country’s entrepreneurial market and will highlight the great potential and talents we have as a nation. It is a pleasure to be part of this meaningful show.”

On her part, Fajer Al Pachachi, General Manager at Hope Ventures, said: “The Kuwaiti market is rich in the caliber of its entrepreneurs, which makes our expansion all the



Riham Al Ayyar



Fajer Al Pachachi

more exciting. We created Beban to function as a borderless investment platform that facilitates co-investment opportunities alongside the private sector, which possesses the knowledge and networks needed for

businesses to strategically accelerate their growth. We look forward to welcoming Kuwaiti applicants and expanding Beban’s presence in the region to Kuwait besides Ms. Riham Al Ayyar.”

Kuwaiti health consultant urges to abide by food safety during travel

KUWAIT CITY, July 22, (KUNA): Dr. Ghanim Al-Juhailan, Kuwait’s consultant of internal medicine and infectious diseases at Al-Adan Hospital, urged Thursday people to stick to food safety to avoid diseases transmitted during travel.

Speaking to KUNA in a statement, Al-Juhailan advised people to be cautious when they drink or eat during travel for their safety due to the spreads of some diseases in some countries.

He stated that high temperature leads to food spoilage, and causes bacteria and food poisoning in summer.

He warned against food poisoning during heatwaves affect several countries in summer,

calling for abiding by food safety and avoiding keeping food at high temperature for longer times.

The most communicable diseases are flu and adenoviruses that affect respiratory system, and cause bronchitis, bronchiolitis, and pneumonia, he said.

Al-Juhailan also cautioned against some diseases, such as hepatitis A caused by virus infection centered in some areas in Africa, and South and Central America.

He said that there is also dengue fever, which causes severe headache, fever and severe joint pain, in addition to a rash, which might appear with bright red skin transmitted by mosquitoes.

18-month grace period to accomplish task

Upcoming mandatory accreditation of healthcare providers: 5 tips to succeed

KUWAIT CITY, July 22: Starting from Aug 1 2023, all the healthcare facilities within the Gulf Insurance Group medical network or those willing to join it, must obtain a special health accreditation, issued by one of the authorized international institutions, says official representative of Accreditation Canada in Kuwait Olga Melnyk.



Olga Melnyk

There is an 18-month grace period to accomplish the task. Otherwise, the healthcare provider will be excluded from the Gulf Insurance Group medical network.

For the last decade, only hospitals providing acute services, have gained much experience in the abovementioned accreditation process. Thus, smaller clinics, labs and pharmacies might take the upcoming mandatory health accreditation as a huge challenge. What is more, it is going to be a race against time, since the accreditation certificate must be obtained before January 31, 2025.

Accreditation

Nevertheless, there is good news for the medical service providers under the Gulf Insurance Group umbrella. One of the leading accreditation providers in Kuwait, being represented in the market for more than 15 years, has been preparing for the upcoming mandatory accreditation for the past 6 months.

This company is Accreditation Canada, one of the renowned authorized providers of accreditation for the Gulf Insurance Group network. Here are 5 tips to succeed the health accreditation with Accreditation Canada:

Focus on the weak points that might fail the accreditation, foresee the toughest stages of the accreditation journey, study in detail all the criteria and conditions, plan the budget

and accreditation expenses and find an adviser to optimize the accreditation process

One of the biggest privileges of cooperating with the Accreditation Canada is that it is the only authorized accreditation provider with an official representative residing in Kuwait.

Due to this fact, communication is rapid, easy (no time differences) and therefore, highly effective. Having similar accreditation experience in other countries, Accreditation Canada experts are ready to share their experience, guide and support in every single nuance of the accreditation process.

In this regard, Accreditation Canada is going to hold online webinars and offline workshops to fully support newcomers and get them ready for the accreditation.

Furthermore, there is a special tailor-made price policy for the GIG network members that will significantly ease the financial load on the healthcare providers.

Olga Melnyk of Accreditation Canada can be reached via Instagram (@accreditation.ca), email olga.melnyk@accreditation.ca or LinkedIn.

KUWAIT CITY, July 22: A recent meeting between the Minister of Commerce and Industry, Muhammad Al-Aiban, and representatives of the Real Estate Union, focused on the repercussions of the decision issued by the Real Estate Registration Department of the Ministry of Justice banning the registration of investment and commercial real estate property in the names of real estate companies listed on the stock exchange, partly owned by foreigners, despite the fact that a majority of these companies’ shares are owned by Kuwaitis, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The source said that the meeting with the Minister of Commerce was positive and constructive, since the minister has promised to look into the file and provide an optimal solution to the issue since a large number of real estate companies are suffering from the problem.

The source added the Minister of Commerce has been informed that the decision of Justice Ministry has harmed the real estate companies, especially those listed on the stock exchange since these companies have foreign shareholders, stressing these measures have not only confused the real estate market, but rather the Kuwaiti economy as a whole, because it has created a kind of stumbling block when it comes to attracting foreign capital, and this is inconsistent with the Kuwait Vision 2035 and making the country a global financial center.

Approval

He pointed out that the Real Estate Union stressed, during its meeting with the minister, the need to work on what is stated in Article 2 of Law No. 20 of 2000, which stipulates that “the Minister of Commerce and Industry, after the approval of the Council of Ministers, may set controls on the contribution of non-Kuwaitis in the real estate sector.”

According to the source, representatives of the real estate companies were surprised during the meeting to know that banks are allowed to register real estate on the stock exchange market although banks also employ non-Kuwaitis and own shares while the same facility is not available to other listed real estate companies.

If risks are the foremost reason to prevent real estate firms from registering that it should be applicable to everyone without exception. If we accept the application of the law to banks, then we can imagine the extent of the direct and serious damage to the local economy, which may be risky and bring about catastrophic results for the banking and credit sector in Kuwait.

Accordingly, the union expressed its hope that the Minister of Commerce would issue a decision that defines the controls for non-Kuwaiti ownership of real estate, allowing them to own shares only, and prohibiting their ownership of real estate, provided that the decision includes the inadmissibility of companies of all kinds, whether upon their establishment or liquidation, to distribute their assets to shareholders irrespective if they are non-Kuwaitis, otherwise it will be forcibly sold, provided that the foreigner receives cash in exchange for the property, stressing that this decision – if issued – will achieve the required balance between protecting real estate ownership and protecting foreign capital at the same time, and at the same time this will correspond to the great developments in the Commercial Companies Law, the Capital Markets Authority, and the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority Law.

MoCI, Real Estate Union meet focuses on ‘repercussions of decision’ issued by MoJ

Kuwaitis owned majority of companies’ shares



KUNA photo

The Kuwaiti Humanitarian Medical Team (Shifaa) – located in the Hatay region in southern Turkey, in continuation of its previous efforts in saving the victims of the Syrian war and the earthquake that struck southern Turkey last February.

Kuwaiti medical team conducts surgeries in Turkiye

The Kuwaiti medical team “Shifaa” has conducted in the second day of its mission in southern Turkey 14 surgeries for people wounded in latest quakes and the Syrian war.

Dr. Amer Shuaib, a specialist in

foot surgery and bones at the Royal Hospital in Manchester, told KUNA on Friday that the surgeries mainly tackled fractures. He thanked Kuwait Alms House for bearing costs of the surgeries.

The Kuwaiti team has a seven-year experience of medical aid in southern Turkey. The doctors and surgeons have conducted more than 330 operations and treated 8,200 patients. (KUNA)

Sinister motives

Movie scams: fraudsters exploit Barbie, Oppenheimer popularity

LONDON, July 22: Barbie and Oppenheimer rapidly became two of the most highly anticipated movies of the year. Unfortunately, as is often the case with such popular topics, scammers wasted no time in exploiting Barbie’s and Oppenheimer’s immense popularity for their own sinister motives. Now, Kaspersky has found that scammers are deceiving unsuspecting users by distributing phishing scams that prey on the excitement surrounding the movie releases, all with the sole intention of tricking individuals and unlawfully acquiring their hard-earned money and sensitive personal data.

One of the fraudulent pages discovered lures users with special offers on Barbie dolls coinciding with the movie launch. Besides the regular dolls, users are being enticed to buy limited-edition movie-related dolls, including one of the lead actress Margot Robbie for around 12 pounds sterling. They can add a helicopter for £56, making the total cost of the purchase £60 (with an “exclusive” discount). However, once users decide what to buy, they are redirected to a purchase form that requires personal identification details such as name, address, phone number, and banking information. Unsuspecting users unknowingly send their money and private data directly to fraudsters. Besides the financial risks, this scam also poses

serious privacy concerns, as the stolen data could potentially be sold on the Dark Web Market.

Scammers

The scammers did not miss out on another popular release, Oppenheimer, which was scheduled for the same day. They tricked people by offering to stream the movie for free, but their real intention was to steal users’ banking information and money. In such scenarios, scammers often employ a tactic in which they request a nominal fee of one dollar or euro for registration. However, this seemingly harmless payment requirement could raise a red flag. To proceed with the registration, they require that a bank card be linked, therefore enabling unauthorized and difficult-to-cancel debits from users’ accounts.

“Premieres and exciting events bring a wave of anticipation, but amidst the thrill, it’s crucial for users to remain alert and adhere to basic online safety rules. While the experience is exhilarating, we must not overlook the risks. By maintaining a vigilant mindset and practicing safe online habits, we can fully enjoy the Barbie and Oppenheimer experience while safeguarding ourselves from cyber threats lurking in the digital world,” comments Olga Svistunova, security expert at Kaspersky.

Al-Ghais to participate in G20 meet

OPEC Secretary General Haitham Al-Ghais will participate in the G20 Energy Ministerial Meeting in Goa, India, on July 22.

The Secretary General, in a press release issued by the organization on Friday, said: "It is an honour to be representing OPEC's member countries at the meeting, and one that is taking place in India, a key strategic dialogue partner of our organization. It is a vital platform to highlight OPEC's views on energy transitions and to further

collaborate with key stakeholders."

Al-Ghais will deliver a statement affirming that energy security must be for all and decarbonization must go hand-in-hand. He will also underscore the fact that there is no one-size-fits-all pathway to a sustainable energy future, and the importance of continued investments in the oil industry.

OPEC regularly participates in G20 energy meetings given its vital and important role in supporting stability of oil and energy markets. (KUNA)

Iraq to supply Lebanon with fuel

Iraqi Oil Minister Hayan Abdul Ghani and Lebanese Minister of Energy and Water Walid Fayyad signed on Friday a memorandum of understanding (MoU), whereby Baghdad would supply Beirut with fuel and crude oil.

The MoU is based on a previous Iraqi Cabinet resolution that aims at providing Lebanon with fuel oil and crude oil in support of its electricity sector, the Iraqi minister said in a press

statement.

He added that a joint technical committee would be set up to lay down appropriate mechanisms for putting in place the agreement involving quantities, transport, loading and unloading, and other technical and logistical obligations.

For his part, the Lebanese minister lauded Iraq's support and help to his country to overcome its fuel and power crises. (KUNA)

Musk gets new hearing

A federal appeals court Friday said it will reconsider its March ruling that Tesla CEO Elon Musk unlawfully threatened to take away employees' stock options in a 2018 Twitter post amid an organizing effort by the United Auto Workers union.

Three judges on the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans upheld a National Labor Relations Board order to delete the tweet. The panel also upheld an order to rehire a fired Tesla

employee, with back pay.

But Friday's brief order says a majority of the court's full-time judges have voted to hear the matter again - this time before the full court. The March ruling was vacated - snatching away, at least for now, a UAW legal victory.

The case arose amid UAW organizing efforts at a Tesla facility in Fremont, California, and years before Musk bought the platform in 2022. (AP)

Market Movements

21-07-2023

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts
PAKISTAN - KSE 100	+0.575	45,888.25	UAE - DFM	-0.04	3,986.36
PHILIPPINES - PSEI	+0.51	6,647.56	JAPAN - Nikkei	-0.57	32,304.25
SAUDI - Tadawul	+0.03	11,755.94	EGYPT - EGX 30	-0.17	17,578.67

Business

'The joy I feel today is unforgettable and I thank Gulf Bank for always rewarding its customers'

Gulf Bank deposits KD 1 million into Sharefa Mohamad Ghloum Ashraf's account

KUWAIT CITY, July 22: Gulf Bank welcomed Ms. Sharefa Mohamad Ghloum – the winner of the semi-annual AIDanah draw of KD 1 million – which took place amid a wide audience at the Avenues Mall, in the presence of representatives of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Ernst & Young

Following the completion of the award procedures, and the deposit of the KD 1 million into her personal account, the 20th millionaire of the AIDanah account, Ms. Ghloum, expressed her joy and happiness towards this unforgettable event and thanked Gulf Bank for always rewarding its customers.

The winner indicated that she was looking for a savings account that would provide customers with special prizes, and that nothing was better than the Al Danah Millionaire account. She further stated that she has had an AIDanah account for more than 13 years now, and that the majority of her family members have accounts at Gulf Bank as well.

On this occasion, Gulf Bank's General Manager of Consumer Banking, Mr. Mohammad Al-Qattan, said: "We congratulate Ms. Sharefa Mohamad Ghloum on winning the semi-annual AIDanah draw



Gulf Bank's General Manager of Consumer Banking, Mohammad Al-Qattan.

prize of KD 1 million. At Gulf Bank, we always strive to provide an exceptional and distinctive, banking experience for our customers. This is part of our community role in rewarding savers and encouraging a culture of saving."

He added: "There are still many opportunities to win in the monthly, quarterly, semi-annual and annual draws and we are excited to continue rewarding our customers for saving in the AIDanah account. We encourage everyone to continue saving to

increase their chances of winning the grand prize draw of KD 2 million, that is set to happen on January 18, 2024; keeping in mind that the last chance to deposit and qualify for the grand draw prize is September 30, 2023."

The AIDanah account is one of the most rewarding savings accounts in Kuwait, with periodic draws that award valuable prizes and multiple benefits for account holders. Gulf Bank's AIDanah account offers monthly opportunities to win KD 1,000 to ten lucky winners, in addition to two quarterly draws with KD 100,000 prizes each, a semi-annual draw prize of KD 1 million and a grand draw prize of KD 2 Million.

Moreover, to enter the upcoming draws, Gulf Bank customers can open an AIDanah account at any time, and to increase their chances of winning, account holders must either maintain the minimum deposit amount of KD 200 or increase their AIDanah savings. The higher the balance in an account, the more chances get accumulated over time. Additionally, opening an AIDanah account is now easier than ever, with customers being able to open their accounts online through Gulf Bank's Online and Mobile Banking services.



Gulf Bank welcome Ms. Sharefa Mohamad Ghloum – the winner of the semi-annual AIDanah draw of KD 1 million.

The AIDanah Millionaire account provides a multitude of valuable services to its customers, including access to an exclusive AIDanah ATM card, that is ideal for depositing money into their account, any time. Account holders can now also calculate their chances of winning the monthly, quarterly and annual draws using the AIDanah Calculator, available on Gulf Bank's Online and Mobile Banking App.

Oil between Russia and China

By Kamel Al-Harami
Independent Oil Analyst

RUSSIA is pushing its crude oil exports to the main big buyers of its hugely discounted oil, thereby overtaking any other producers. It is doing the same with India.

Meanwhile, China is hitting its highest imports of crude oil, reaching more than 11. 4 million barrels per day last month. Its highest volume of imports was more than 2.6 million barrels per day, thereby taking over the number 1 position from Saudi Arabia, which is 2 million barrels per day and Russia, which is 2.2 million barrels per day.

China has been importing cheap oils from Russia, filling whatever storage is available to accommodate the cheap oils, perhaps knowing that such a price will not last. Or it could be based on some political lessons with the ongoing Russian war in Ukraine, or in consideration of future supply constraints with Saudi Arabia extending one million barrels in August, and Russia's commitment in reducing its production by 500,000 barrels from August, thereby causing tightness in oil and anticipation of some shortages. This can explain the reason behind China heavily building up her capacity and making ullage for further storage for oil.

China can maximize its refining operation to produce more petroleum products for export with a profit of \$4 per barrel over its imported crude oils from Russia. So far it is enjoying a competitive advantage over other petroleum products exporters, for sure. Perhaps, it will keep on importing Russian oils as long as the G7 sanctions remain, and help its economy rebound



Al-Harami

and shift away from the phase of low growth.

India is also taking such advantage of the cheap Russian oil to maximize its oil imports. It is importing oil at a price more than \$9 cheaper for a barrel compared to the rest of the Arabian Gulf suppliers.

Oil prices are slowly climbing up, standing at \$80 a barrel today, which is a sign of tightness in the market in preparation for the winter period and the end of the driving season. This comes along with the USA's strategic reserve at its lowest since more than 40 years, as a result of USA administration's use of it to reduce oil prices in the USA. This happened even though the strategic reserve should be used for emergency purposes only, instead of using it for political reasons for instance to bring down the price. The voters are certainly happy, but will it last long enough for next year's election, with \$3.50 per gallon compared to a high of \$5 per gallon?

Oil prices should go up in the coming months with OPEC+ cuts. Russia's commitment to 500,000 barrels per day will put pressure on supply at a time when the oil industry is preparing for winter months' grade. Meanwhile, Europe has still not found a replacement for Russian gas, which adds more pressure on oil prices.

As if this is not enough for oil supply, the USA administration is debating whether to stop selling any crude oil from its strategic supply to China.

Certainly, the dominance of China in the energy market, with its 11.4 million barrels of buying cheap oils, will impact supply. However, will it last? Maybe... as long as the current embargo on Russian oils is in place, and with a price tag of \$60 per barrel and maybe lower to encourage more potential buyers, and with required refining capacity to convert crude oils to petroleum products for wider customers. Therefore, China and Russia are currently in dominance of the oil markets.

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KIB 'launches' its new real estate digital platform KIB Aqari with distinct features

Backed by first property appraisal service of its kind in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, July 22: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) launched its brand-new real estate digital platform, dedicated to its customers interested in owning, selling, and renting real estate. The platform, KIB Aqari, is supported by a property appraisal service being launched digitally for the first time in Kuwait. This step comes as part of KIB's commitment to keep pace with the latest digital innovations and its expansion strategy for e-banking services. The Bank constantly aims to provide an unprecedented experience for its customers, to save them time and effort, and to meet their business needs smoothly and safely.



KIB's Fahad Al Saleh

Commenting on the launch, Fahad Al Saleh, Manager of the Real Estate Advisory Division and the Product Development and Support Division (PDSD) at KIB's Real Estate Department, said: "Today we witness a quantum leap to an advanced stage in the world of specialized digital banking services and products. KIB has always been proactive in leading this field by constantly developing and innovating to keep pace with developments in the banking sector within the process of digital transformation. The Bank is also always keen to provide the latest banking technologies that meet the aspirations and needs of customers in different ways while ensuring safety. Through this new launch, KIB has proven its ability to exceed all expectations and accomplish a new achievement that is in line with its culture of progress and moving towards a future of sustainable development."

Al Saleh added that the new KIB Aqari platform will be a one-stop destination for all real estate needs. The platform is designed to enable customers to enjoy a wide range of distinguished real estate services and solutions, on top of which is the property appraisal service. This service, which is being launched digitally for the first time in Kuwait, will allow platform users to track property appraisal requests and validate appraisals using a QR code. KIB

Aqari also offers numerous other advantages for real estate management, starting with the automated rent collection service, all the way to the ability to track the status of late and overdue rent payments, along with many other features that ensure the convenience of customers.

It is worth noting that KIB always strives to provide an advanced digital banking experience that suits the lifestyle of its customers. The Bank continues its journey of innovation and change through its new strategy that focuses on providing a more advanced and luxurious experience to its customers, rooted in its main slogan 'Bank for Life'.

SFD signs \$10 mln loan agreement to construct business incubation centers

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia, July 22, (AP): The Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) Chief Executive Officer, H.E. Sultan Al-Marshad, signed the first development loan agreement worth \$10 million in SFD's headquarters in Riyadh with Hon. Isaac Chester Cooper, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, Investments & Aviation.

The agreement involves the construction of business incubation centers across three islands in the Bahamas to support the growth of tourism, and signifies SFD's commitment to supporting sustainable economic development in developing countries and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) around the world. The signing marks SFD's first presence in the Bahamas, making it the 89 th country to receive funding for a development project from SFD.

The loan will facilitate the establishment of dedicated business incubation centers across three islands to support new business projects. Specifically, these will accommodate 50 small businesses on Nassau Island, 25 small businesses on Exuma Island, and 25 small businesses on Grand Bahama Island.

The project is poised to enhance the tourism sector in the Bahamas, create direct and indirect job opportunities, and contribute towards realizing the United Nations' Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth, and SDG 9, Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure.

On this occasion, Hon. Isaac Chester Cooper, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, Investments & Aviation, said: "This agreement marks a significant step in our nation's journey towards sustainable growth, with the support of Saudi Arabia through the Saudi Fund for Development. The upcoming business incubation centers will act as catalysts for our aspiring entrepreneurs and help to accelerate job creation and enhance our tourism sector. This partnership reflects a shared vision of prosperity and development."

On his part, H.E. Sultan Al-Marshad, Chief Executive Officer of the Saudi Fund for Development, said: "SFD is committed to promoting sustainable socio-economic development in developing nations and Small Island Developing States, while supporting the journey to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. This project promises to nurture entrepreneurship in the Bahamas and stimulate economic growth through the provision of new business and job opportunities in the tourism sector. The agreement further solidifies our commitment to achieving a shared, prosperous, and sustainable future for developing countries worldwide."

Police find melted-down gold after theft of Celtic coins and seek rest of treasure

BERLIN, July 22, (AP): Investigators looking into the theft of hundreds of ancient gold coins from a German museum have found lumps of gold that appear to have resulted from part of the treasure being melted down, but still hold out hope of finding the rest intact, officials said .

Four suspects were arrested on Tuesday over the Nov. 22 break-in at the Celtic and Roman Museum in the Bavarian town of Manching in which 483 Celtic coins discovered during an archaeological dig in 1999 were stolen. The coins date to around 100 B.C.

Authorities said Thursday that DNA found on an object outside the museum, which they wouldn't identify, led them to the suspects, three of whom they linked to a series of previous break-ins in Germany and neighboring Austria dating back to 2014. The Manching robbery appeared to be the alleged gang's first targeting cultural treasures.

The coins and a lump of unworked gold were discovered during excavations of an ancient settlement in Manching, and authorities have said they are considered the biggest trove of Celtic gold found in the 20th century.

The deputy head of Bavaria's state criminal police office, Guido Limmer, told reporters in Munich that authorities have examined 18 lumps of gold that were recovered this week. Each is believed to be the result of four coins being melted down, and Limmer said that the non-standard alloy largely matches that of the treasure, though a further analysis is ongoing.

"We know that about 70 gold coins have apparently been lost irretrievably in their cultural and historical significance," said Bavaria's state culture minister, Markus Blume. "But that means that of course there is still hope of perhaps being able to find the rest of the gold coins, and so the majority of the gold treasure."

Searches for the missing objects were continuing in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania state in northeastern Germany, where three of the suspects were arrested, and elsewhere.

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KIB new real estate digital platform 'KIB Aqari'.

US jobless claims fall again as labor market continues to flash strength

Fewer Americans applied for unemployment benefits last week with the labor market continuing to cruise along despite higher interest rates intended to cool hiring.

U.S. applications for jobless claims fell by 9,000 to 228,000 for the week ending July 15, from 237,000 previous week, the Labor Department reported Thursday.

The four-week moving average of claims, which evens out some of the weekly volatility, fell by 9,250 to 237,500.

Jobless claim applications are viewed as reflective of the number of layoffs in a given week.

For three weeks in late May and early June, jobless claims had appeared to reach a sustained, higher level, above 260,000. But the past four weeks, claims have retreated and the labor market remains historically healthy.

Since more than 20 million jobs vanished when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in the spring of 2020, U.S. employers have added jobs at a blistering pace,

more often than not beating forecasts. Despite the fastest interest rate hikes since 1989, the unemployment rate has hardly budged and remains historically low at 3.6%.

Fed officials have said that the unemployment rate needs to rise well past 4% to bring inflation down, but a report last week showed that consumer prices fell to their lowest level since early 2021 - 3% in June compared with a year earlier - and much closer to the Fed's target of 2%. (AP)



A hiring sign is displayed at a retail store in Downers Grove, Ill., Wednesday, April 12, 2023. On Thursday, the Labor Department reports on the number of people who applied for unemployment benefits last week. (AP)

WS closes another winning wk by barely moving

Asian shares mixed as investors weigh weakness in tech sector

NEW YORK, July 22, (AP): Wall Street closed out another winning week with a quiet Friday, as stocks found some stability after sliding the day before.

The S&P 500 edged up by 1.47, or less than 0.1%, to 4,536.34 to cap its eighth winning week in the last 10. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 2.51 points, or less than 0.1%, to 35,227.69, its 10th gain in a row. The Nasdaq composite slipped 30.50, or 0.2%, to 14,032.81 a day after tumbling to its worst loss in more than four months.

Roper Technologies rallied 3.7% for one of the larger gains in the S&P 500 after it reported better profit and revenue for the spring than analysts expected. The company, which looks to dominate niche tech markets, also raised its financial forecasts for the full year.

The earnings reporting season is gaining momentum, and a majority of companies are reporting better results than expected. They're doing so by a bit less than usual, though, according to FactSet.

On the losing side of Wall Street was American Express, which fell 3.9%. It reported stronger profit for the spring than expected, but its revenue fell short of forecasts.

Comerica swung from an initial gain to a loss of 4.1% after reporting stronger profit and revenue for the spring than analysts expected. The regional bank also reported a decline in average customer deposits, though it said the levels stabilized in the second half of the quarter. Deposits have been under heavy scrutiny since several banks failed in March after customers suddenly yanked out their cash.

The stock market has generally been on a tear this year as the economy has defied predictions for a recession. It's so far powered through much higher interest rates meant to bring down inflation, and the hope is that it may outlast the Federal Reserve's rate-hike campaign.

The Fed is widely expected to raise its federal funds rate on Wednesday to its highest level since 2001. But the hope is that will be the final increase of the cycle because inflation has been cooling since last summer. The federal funds rate started last year at virtually zero.

To be sure, the 18.1% jump for the S&P 500 this year also has critics saying the rally has come too far, too fast. The risk of recession remains because inflation and interest rates remain high.

When Fed Chair Jerome Powell speaks on Wednesday after the central bank's



A pedestrian passes by the Hong Kong Stock Exchange electronic screen in Hong Kong, Friday, July 21, 2023. Shares were mixed Friday in Asia after the latest rally on Wall Street fizzled, with big declines for Tesla, Netflix and other big tech-oriented stocks. (AP)

decision on rates, economists at Deutsche Bank say he "is likely to emphasize that further evidence is needed to have confidence inflation will be tamed."

Besides the Fed meeting, next week will also feature earnings reports from three of the "Magnificent Seven" companies behind the majority of the S&P 500's gains this year. Alphabet, Meta Platforms and Microsoft will report their earnings, and expectations are high after they all soared more than 35% so far this year.

Another one of the seven, Tesla, slumped sharply on Thursday despite reporting stronger profit and revenue than expected on fears about upcoming growth. It helped drag the S&P 500 to a loss and the Nasdaq composite to a drop of 2.1%.

The top stocks have become so big and their movements have become so influential over the market that Nasdaq is rebalancing its Nasdaq 100 index before trad-

ing begins Monday, to lessen the impact some stocks have on the overall index.

The seven stocks, which also include Amazon, Apple and Nvidia, are collectively trading with stock prices that are 44 times higher than their earnings per share over the last 12 months, according to Savita Subramanian, equity strategist at Bank of America.

That's an expensive level compared with history, but the other stocks in the S&P 500 are trading at a more reasonable-looking 17 times earnings. The stock market's gains have broadened out a bit recently, and Subramanian said in a BofA Global Research report that she expects that to continue.

Asia

Shares were mixed Friday in Asia after the latest rally on Wall Street fizzled, with big declines for Tesla, Netflix and other big tech-oriented stocks.

Hong Kong, Seoul and Bangkok advanced while Tokyo, Shanghai and Sydney declined. U.S. futures edged higher and oil prices also climbed.

Taiwan's Taiex 0.8% fell after TSMC, the world's biggest manufacturer of computer chips, said it expects its sales to fall 10% this year as demand wanes. It also said it would not meet a 2024 target for starting production at a factory under construction in Arizona. TSMC's shares fell 3.1%.

Japan reported consumer inflation edged higher in June, from 3.2% to 3.3%, but mainly due to increases in electricity rates. Price increases excluding energy and volatile food costs fell. That eases pressure on the central bank to adjust the ultra-lax monetary policy that it has kept in place for over a decade to counter sluggish economic growth.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index lost 0.4% to 32,351.56, while the S&P/ASX 200 declined 0.2% to 7,307.80. The Shanghai Composite index slipped 0.2% to 3,162.37.

In Seoul, the Kospi gained 0.1% to 2,603.66 and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index advanced 0.5% to 19,029.45. Thailand's SET rose 0.4%.

Oil

In other trading Friday, U.S. benchmark crude oil gained 63 cents to \$76.28 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It picked up 36 cents to \$75.65 on Thursday. Brent crude oil, the pricing basis for international trading, rose 62 cents to \$80.26 a barrel.

Currencies

The U.S. dollar rose to 140.22 Japanese yen from 140.07 yen. The euro strengthened to \$1.1138 from \$1.1130.

Global energy summit

New initiative to scale low-carbon fuel production OK'd by ministers

GOA, India, July 22, (PR Newswire): The Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM) has today adopted the Clean Energy Marine Hubs Initiative (CEM-Hubs) at a summit in Goa, India. The first-of-its-kind platform brings together the private sector and governments across the energy-maritime value chain to transform maritime transportation and production hubs for future low-carbon fuels. The CEM-Hubs initiative is initially backed by Canada, Norway, Panama, Uruguay and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in partnership with the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), and the International Association of Ports & Harbors (IAPH). The CEM Hubs initiative is a partnership that's jointly led by private sector and governments working in close collaboration.

The energy maritime value chain is far from ready to transport the influx of low-carbon fuels that are expected between now and 2050. To accommodate demand, the shipping industry is expected to transport at least 50% of all traded low carbon fuels by 2050, according to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). But the production centres, vessels and port infrastructure required to accommodate expected demand do not currently exist at commercial scale.

So far only one ship in the whole global fleet has been piloted to transport liquefied hydrogen - travelling from Australia to Japan. For hydrogen derivatives such as ammonia and other low-carbon fuels moved by ships, the scale is far from what heavy industries, transport, and other sectors would require. To support the global transition to net-zero targets, shipping is expected to transport between two and up to five times the low-carbon fuels it will consume by 2050. The mix of fuels that shipping moves will also need to change to be aligned to the Paris Agreement.

Participants have convened in Goa for the first ever CEM-Hub meeting. The initiative was adopted less than a year after it was first presented, in an unprecedented move by the Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM) that reflects the immense scale of the problem and urgency to establish solutions. The CEM-Hubs initiative and progress will be featured at the next COP28 in Dubai.

The initiative is also supported by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and the Global Centre for Maritime Decarbonisation (GCMDC).

Jean-François Gagné, Head of Secretariat, Clean Energy Ministerial, said: "Ports, shipping, and the logistics network need to be an integral part of the global clean energy transition. The Clean Energy Marine Hubs Initiative is a truly public-private platform between energy, maritime, shipping and finance communities. It represents a unique opportunity to develop concrete implementable actions to ensure greener supply chains globally."

The Honourable Omar Alghabra, Canada's Minister of Transport, said: "Canada is pleased to announce its participation as a found-

ing member of the Clean Energy Marine Hubs Initiative, alongside esteemed partners such as the International Chamber of Shipping, the International Association of Ports and Harbours, and other countries from around the world. This vital initiative will reinforce the pivotal role our ports and marine sector will play in advancing the global energy transition. By facilitating the secure and efficient transportation of new clean energy resources, including hydrogen, ammonia, and renewable diesel produced right here in Canada, we are taking significant steps towards a sustainable future on a global scale."

Jorge Rivera, Government of Panama's National Energy Secretary, commented: "We are very excited about the launching of the Clean Energy Marine Hubs initiative. Without any doubt, this is going to be a turning point in these sustainable initiatives around the world, and the connection between the energy and maritime industries. We expect to have great results in the short, medium, and long term."

Bjørn Højgaard, CEO of Anglo-Eastern, commented: "Decarbonisation continues to dominate international shipping's agenda, with alternative fuels playing a critical role in the push to net zero by 2050, as revised at this July's MEPC 80. While much has been explored and discussed about the environmental and technical aspects of alternative fuels, one key area has received less attention: the logistics of alternative fuels. No solution can stand on its own without the necessary infrastructure to support it, which CEM Hubs is addressing."

Captain Rajalingam, MISC's President and Group CEO, said: "As leaders in global shipping, we recognise transportation's pivotal role in transitioning to a clean energy economy. The adoption, transportation, and integration of future fuels into the broader economy demands immediate action to unlock demand and achieve scale. We are committed to driving this agenda forward, collaboratively and with purpose."

Guy Platten, Secretary General of the International Chamber of Shipping, commented: "The momentous speed at which the CEM Hub initiative has been adopted speaks volumes to not only the scale of the challenge before us and the urgency to act, but also the economic opportunity low-carbon energy production offers - particularly to developing economies. For first movers it presents a golden opportunity to develop an industry that will catalyse economic growth and prosperity and provide energy stability for their citizens."

Patrick Verhoeven, IAPH Managing Director, commented: "It will be the role of shipping and the ports that serve them to become the enablers of the energy transition by offering the capacity to transport what is expected to be 50% of all global zero-carbon fuels. For candidate countries this presents a golden opportunity to develop the hub concept as catalysts of economic growth and prosperity for their citizens."

NEW YORK, July 22, (AP): FTX founder Sam Bankman-Fried is harassing a key witness against him at his upcoming trial by giving a newspaper personal things she wrote while she was the chief executive of his cryptocurrency hedge fund trading firm, prosecutors say.

They asked a judge late Thursday to order trial participants not to make statements that might taint the yet-to-be-chosen jury in a criminal case over allegations that Bankman-Fried and other top executives cheated investors and looted FTX customer deposits, in part to fund lavish lifestyles.

In a letter to Judge Lewis A. Kaplan, prosecutors said Bankman-Fried gave some of Caroline Ellison's personal correspondence to The New York Times. They said that had the effect of harassing her and seemed designed to deter other potential trial witnesses from testifying.

They called it an effort to "publicly discredit a government witness" and interfere with an Oct. 2 trial.

Ellison, 28, was CEO of Alameda Research, a cryptocurrency hedge fund trading firm that was an offshoot of FTX.

FTX entered bankruptcy in November when the global exchange ran out of money after the equivalent of a bank run.

Ellison pleaded guilty in December to criminal charges that carry a potential penalty of 110 years in prison. She has agreed to testify against Bankman-Fried, 31, as part of a deal that could result in leniency.

Prosecutors said lawyers for Bankman-Fried confirmed that their client had shared documents that were not currently part of trial evidence with The New York Times before it published an article Thursday with the headline: "Private Writings of Caroline Ellison, Star Witness in the FTX Case."

According to the article, Ellison wrote that she did not think she was well suited to running Alameda or de-



FTX founder Sam Bankman-Fried leaves Manhattan federal court in New York, Feb. 16, 2023. Bankman-Fried is harassing a key witness against him at his upcoming trial by giving a newspaper personal things she wrote while she was the chief executive of his cryptocurrency hedge fund trading firm, prosecutors say, Thursday, July 20. (AP)

cise as a leader, and the doubts occurred as she coped with the breakup of a sporadic romantic relationship with Bankman-Fried.

The Times reported that in April 2022, Ellison wrote in a Google document that an earlier breakup with Bankman-Fried had "significantly decreased my excitement about Alameda" and that life at the hedge fund "felt too associated with you in a way that was painful."

Lawyers for Ellison and for Bankman-Fried did not return emails seeking comment Friday. A spokesperson for prosecutors declined comment.

In their letter to Kaplan, prosecutors stopped short of asking the judge to jail

Bankman-Fried in the weeks before his trial.

They said Ellison was expected to testify at trial that she agreed with Bankman-Fried to defraud FTX's customers and investors and Alameda's lenders.

Prosecutors accused Bankman-Fried of trying to "cast Ellison in a poor light, and advance his defense through the press and outside the constraints of the courtroom and rules of evidence: that Ellison was a jilted lover who perpetrated these crimes alone."

They said they expect "overwhelming evidence to give the lie to this defense," and they called it improper

and prejudicial for Bankman-Fried to malign Ellison's credibility before the trial.

Prosecutors also wrote that lawyers for potential trial witnesses, including some who live abroad, said their clients were hesitant to testify in a case with persistent media attention.

"These witness concerns will only be heightened if witnesses are made to fear that a consequence of testifying against the defendant may include personal humiliation and efforts to discredit their reputation that go beyond what the rules of evidence might permit during cross examination," prosecutors wrote.

Near-historic low inventory for sale

Home sales in June fell to the slowest pace since January

Beach closures prevent sunbathers from taking a dip

Many sunbathers who want to take a dip in the cool water to escape the summer heat are being thwarted by high bacteria levels in water at popular beaches across New England.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health reported that 78 public beaches were closed Wednesday, mostly because of high levels of bacteria. Nearly a dozen beaches and bodies of water in New Hampshire were also under some sort of advisory. In Maine, eight beaches were closed

because of contamination. There was no swimming at 10 state parks in Vermont.

Most of the closures were because of high levels of E. coli associated with waste. Others were for algae blooms, some of which can be toxic.

Some of the high levels of bacteria in lakes and ponds can be linked to heavy rainfall that caused flooding and contamination, including agricultural runoff. That's also contributing to problems in coastal waters.

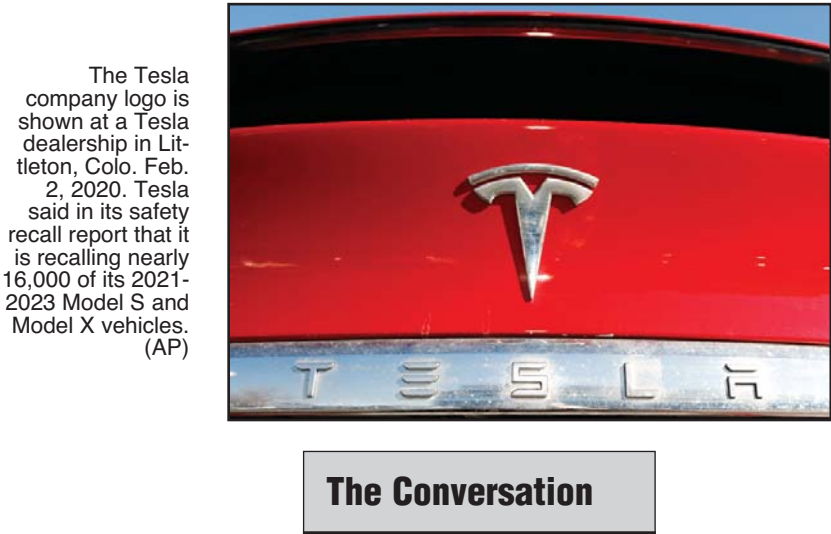
on the market by the end of June, down 13.6% from a year earlier, the NAR said. That amounts to a 3.1-month supply at the current sales pace. In a more balanced market between buyers and sellers, there is a 5- to 6-month supply.

The shortage of homes for sale has kept the market competitive, driving bidding wars in many places, especially for the most affordable homes. About one-third of homes purchased last month sold for above their list price, and 76% of

homes sold in June were on the market for less than a month.

"This is a tough market to be a buyer," Yun said.

The combination of high borrowing costs and intense competition for the most affordable homes on the market is shutting out many first-time buyers. They accounted for 27% of home sales last month, down from 28% in May and 30% in June last year, the NAR said. In a normal housing market, that would be 40%.



The Tesla company logo is shown at a Tesla dealership in Littleton, Colo., Feb. 2, 2020. Tesla said in its safety recall report that it is recalling nearly 16,000 of its 2021-2023 Model S and Model X vehicles. (AP)

The Conversation

Tesla recalling nearly 16,000 of its 2021-2023 Model S and Model X vehicles

Tesla is recalling nearly 16,000 of its 2021-2023 Model S and Model X vehicles because some front-row seat belts may not have been reconnected properly after being repaired. Tesla said in its safety recall report that in the vehicles, a first-row seat belt was disconnected from its pretensioner anchor as part of a necessary step to perform a repair. But the seat belt may not have been reconnected to its pretensioner anchor properly after the repair was made.

The company said that if the seat belt isn't reconnected properly, it may not perform as it's supposed to in a collision, which may increase the risk of injury.

U.S. highway safety regulators opened an investigation into possible Tesla seat belt issues in March.

As of June 19, Tesla has identified 12 warranty claims related to the issue, but the company is not aware of any crashes, injuries or deaths that may be related to the seat belt issue. Notification letters will be mailed to owners who have vehicles related to the recall. Tesla said that it will perform free inspections and connect both first-row seat belts to their pretensioner anchors where necessary. If the seat belt can't be connect-

ed to the pretensioner anchor properly, the seat belt assembly will be replaced for free.

Tesla also announced it's recalling more than 1,300 if its 2023 Model S, Model X and Model Y vehicles because of a camera issue. The company said in its recall report that on some vehicles vehicles, the pitch angle of the forward-facing cameras may not be aligned to properly, which may cause certain active safety features to be unavailable, including automatic emergency braking, forward collision warning and lane keeping assist, without alerting the driver to their unavailability.

When Greenland was green: Ancient ‘soil’ from beneath a mile of ice offers warnings for future

By Paul Bierman, University of Vermont and Tammy Rittenour, Utah State University

The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.

About 400,000 years ago, large parts of Greenland were ice-free. Scrubby tundra basked in the Sun's rays on the island's northwest highlands. Evidence suggests that a forest of spruce trees, buzzing with insects, covered the southern part of Greenland. Global sea level was much higher then, between 20 and 40 feet above today's levels. Around the world, land that today is home to hundreds of millions of people was under water.

Scientists have known for awhile that the Greenland ice sheet had mostly disappeared at some point in the past million years, but not precisely when.

In a new study in the journal Science, we determined the date, using frozen soil extracted during the Cold War from beneath a nearly mile-thick section of the Greenland ice sheet.

The timing - about 416,000 years ago, with largely ice-free conditions lasting for as much as 14,000 years - is important. At that time, Earth and its early humans were going through one of the longest interglacial periods since ice sheets first covered the high latitudes 2.5 million years ago.

The length, magnitude and effects of that natural warming can help us understand the Earth that modern humans are now creating for the future.

In July 1966, American scientists and U.S. Army engineers completed a six-year effort to drill through the Greenland ice sheet. The drilling took place at Camp Century, one of the military's most unusual bases - it was nuclear powered and made up of a series of tunnels dug into the Greenland ice sheet.

The drill site in northwest Greenland was 138 miles from the coast and underlain by 4,560 feet of ice. Once they reached the bottom of the ice, the team kept drilling 12 more feet into the frozen, rocky soil below.

In 1969, geophysicist Willi Dansgaard's analysis of the ice core from Camp Century revealed for the first time the details of how Earth's climate had changed dramatically over the last 125,000 years. Extended cold glacial periods when the ice expanded quickly gave way to warm interglacial periods when the ice melted and sea level rose, flooding coastal areas around the world.

For nearly 30 years, scientists paid little attention to the 12 feet of frozen soil from Camp Century. One study analyzed the pebbles to understand the bedrock beneath the ice sheet. Another suggested intriguingly that the frozen soil preserved evidence of a time warmer than today. But with no way to date the material, few people paid attention to these studies. By the 1990s, the frozen soil core had vanished.

Several years ago, our Danish colleagues found the lost soil buried deep in a Copenhagen freezer, and we formed an international team to analyze this unique frozen climate archive.

In the uppermost sample, we found perfectly preserved fossil plants - proof positive that the land far below Camp Century had been ice-free some time in the past - but when?

Using samples cut from the center of the sediment core and prepared and analyzed in the dark so that the material retained an accurate memory of its last exposure to sunlight, we now know that the ice sheet covering northwest Greenland - nearly a mile thick today - vanished during the extended natural warm period known to climate scientists as MIS 11, between 424,000 and 374,000 years ago.

To determine more precisely when the ice sheet melted away, one of us,

Tammy Rittenour, used a technique known as luminescence dating.

Over time, minerals accumulate energy as radioactive elements like uranium, thorium, and potassium decay and release radiation. The longer the sediment is buried, the more radiation accumulates as trapped electrons.

In the lab, specialized instruments measure tiny bits of energy, released as light from those minerals. That signal can be used to calculate how long the grains were buried, since the last exposure to sunlight would have released the trapped energy. Paul Bierman's laboratory at the University of Vermont dated the sample's last time near the surface in a different way, using rare radioactive isotopes of aluminum and beryllium.

These isotopes form when cosmic rays, originating far from our solar system, slam into the rocks on Earth. Each isotope has a different half-life, meaning it decays at a different rate when buried.

By measuring both isotopes in the same sample, glacial geologist Drew Christ was able to determine that melting ice had exposed the sediment at the land surface for less than 14,000 years.

Ice sheet models run by Benjamin Keisling, now incorporating our new knowledge that Camp Century was ice-free 416,000 years ago, show that Greenland's ice sheet must have shrunk significantly then.

At minimum, the edge of the ice retreated tens to hundreds of miles around much of the island during that period. Water from that melting ice raised global sea level at least 5 feet and perhaps as much as 20 feet compared to today.

The ancient frozen soil from beneath Greenland's ice sheet warns of trouble ahead. During the MIS 11 interglacial, Earth was warm and ice sheets were restricted to the high latitudes, a lot like today. Carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere remained between 265 and 280 parts per million for about 30,000 years. (AP)

Oil and gas cos would pay more to drill on public lands under a new Biden rule

Previous rate remained unchanged for a century

WASHINGTON, July 22, (AP): Oil and gas companies would have to pay more to drill on public lands and satisfy stronger requirements to clean up old or abandoned wells under a new rule announced Thursday by the Biden administration.

A rule proposed by the Interior Department raises royalty rates for oil drilling by more than one-third, to 16.67%, in accordance with the sweeping climate law approved by Congress last year. The previous rate of 12.5% paid by oil and gas companies for federal drilling rights had remained unchanged for a century. The federal rate was significantly lower than what many states and private landowners charge for drilling leases on state or private lands.

The new rule does not go so far as to prohibit new oil and gas leasing on public lands, as many environmental groups have urged and as President Joe Biden promised during the 2020 campaign. But officials said the proposal would lead to a more responsible leasing process that provides a better return to U.S. taxpayers.

The plan codifies provisions in the climate law, known as the Inflation Reduction Act, as well as the 2021 infrastructure law and recommendations from an Interior report on oil and gas leasing issued in November 2021.

The new rule "provides a fair return to taxpayers, adequately accounts for environmental harms and discourages speculation by oil and gas companies," said Laura Daniel-Davis, principal deputy assistant Interior secretary for land and minerals management.

Interior "is committed to creating a more transparent, inclusive and just approach to leasing and permitting that serves the public interest while protecting natural and cultural resources on our public lands," she added.

The new royalty rate set by the climate law is expected to remain in place until August 2032, after which it can be increased. The higher rate would increase costs for oil and gas companies by an estimated \$1.8 billion in that period, according to the Interior Department.

The rule also would increase the minimum leasing bond paid by energy companies to \$150,000, up from the previous \$10,000 established in 1960. The higher bonding requirement is intended to ensure that companies meet their obligations to clean up drilling sites after they are done or cap wells that are abandoned.

The previous level was far too low to force companies to act and did not cover potential costs to reclaim a well, officials said. As a result, taxpayers frequently end up covering cleanup costs for abandoned or depleted wells if an operator refuses to do so or declares bankruptcy. Hundreds of thousands of "orphaned" oil and gas wells and abandoned coal and hardrock mines pose serious safety hazards, while causing



A flare to burn methane from oil production is seen on a well pad near Watford City, N.D., on Aug. 26, 2021. The Biden administration is proposing new rules for the nation's oil and gas leasing program that would raise costs for energy companies to drill on public lands and strengthen requirements for cleaning up old wells where drilling is completed or abandoned. (AP)

ADNOC to launch 1st high-speed hydrogen refueling station in ME

ABU DHABI, UAE, July 22, (PR Newswire): ADNOC is an early mover in the production of clean hydrogen, and the station under development in Masdar City will support the UAE National Hydrogen Strategy.

Toyota and Al Futtaim Motors to provide hydrogen-powered vehicles to test the high-speed hydrogen refueling station.

ADNOC has allocated \$15 billion to new energies and decarbonization technologies to reduce its carbon intensity by 25% by 2030 and enable its Net Zero by 2050 ambition.

ADNOC, today announced that it has begun construction on the Middle East's first high-speed hydrogen refueling station. The station, which is being built in Masdar City by ADNOC, will create clean hydrogen from water, using an electrolyser powered by clean grid electricity.

Hydrogen, which creates no carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions when used, has the highest energy per mass of any fuel and can give vehicles a longer driving

ongoing environmental damage.

The Interior Department has made available more than \$1 billion in the past two years from the infrastructure law to clean up orphaned oil and gas wells on public lands. The new rule aims to prevent that burden from falling on taxpayers in the future.

Bureau of Land Management Director Tracy Stone-Manning, whose agency issued the new rule, said the proposal "aims to ensure fairness to the taxpayer and balanced, responsible development as we continue to transition to a clean energy economy. It in-

cludes common-sense and needed fiscal revisions to BLM's program, many directed by Congress."

The BLM, an Interior Department agency, oversees more than 245 million acres of public lands, primarily in the West.

Environmental groups hailed the rule change as overdue and said the Biden administration recognized that business as usual by the oil and gas industry is incompatible with increased risks from climate change - a crisis the oil industry played a large role in creating.

"These changes were badly needed

range and quicker refueling times compared with battery electric vehicles.

ADNOC also announced a partnership with Toyota Motor Corporation (Toyota) and Al-Futtaim Motors to test the high-speed hydrogen refueling station using a fleet of clean hydrogen-powered vehicles.

His Excellency Dr. Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and ADNOC Managing Director and Group CEO, said: "The need to reduce carbon emissions to address climate change is clear and urgent. ADNOC is placing sustainability and decarbonization at the heart of its strategy and, while we decarbonize our operations today, we are making robust investments to be a supplier of choice for the clean energies of tomorrow."

"Hydrogen will be a critical fuel for the energy transition, helping to decarbonize economies at scale, and it is a natural extension of our core business. Through this pilot program, we

will gather important data on how hydrogen transportation technology performs as we continue to develop the UAE's hydrogen infrastructure."

Under the partnership, Toyota and Al Futtaim Motors will provide a fleet of hydrogen-powered vehicles. The pilot program will help ADNOC understand how hydrogen with high-speed refueling can best be used in mobility projects to support the UAE's National Hydrogen Strategy, which aims to position the country among the largest producers of hydrogen by 2031.

ADNOC Distribution will operate the station upon its completion later this year. A second station, in Dubai Golf City, will be fitted with a conventional hydrogen fueling system.

ADNOC has allocated \$15 billion (AED55 billion) to advance and accelerate lower-carbon solutions, investing in new energies and decarbonization technologies to reduce its carbon intensity by 25% by 2030 and enable its Net Zero by 2050 ambition.

- to put it mildly - and will help make onshore leasing more fair to taxpayers and hold industry accountable for its harms," said Josh Axelrod of the Natural Resources Defense Council.

But he and other advocates said Biden should keep his promise to end new drilling on public lands. "In addition to making polluters pay with these fiscal reforms, it's time for the Biden administration to align our federal fossil fuel program with America's transition to a clean energy economy," said Mattea Mrkusic of Evergreen Action, another environmental group.

Bid to speed up a just, orderly transition

COP28 and IEA bring together global energy decision makers

GOA, India, July 22, (PR Newswire): The COP28 UAE Presidency and the International Energy Agency (IEA) have convened the first in a landmark series of high-level dialogues through to COP28 around building a 1.5C degree-aligned energy transition. The initiative is being conducted in conjunction with the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and will be supported by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The dialogues are intended to build consensus on 1.5C degree-compatible energy transition pathways and the enabling conditions needed to achieve them, as well as momentum around the target energy outcomes for COP28.

The meetings are being chaired by COP28 President Designate Dr. Sultan Al Jaber and Dr. Fatih Birol, Executive Director of the IEA. The aim is to engage public and private sector decision makers in the energy industry to produce a holistic, global view of the energy system. The dialogues will prepare the ground for specific commitments and calls to action at the World Climate Action Summit being held at COP28.

The session was held on Friday, 21 July on the sidelines of the 14th Clean Energy Ministerial, alongside the G20 Energy Transitions Ministerial Meeting in Goa, India. Delegates at the meeting included various country delegates and private sector representatives.

COP28 President-Designate Dr. Sultan Al Jaber said of the initiative: "COP28 represents a milestone opportunity for the world to come together, unite around decisive action, and drive progress towards keeping the goals of then Paris Agreement alive and 1.5C within reach. This will require a collective effort and so we need everyone at the table - and that includes the energy industry."

Together

"Building a new energy system can only happen at speed and scale with unified action on the supply and the demand side together. These high level dialogues are bringing public and private sector energy decision makers together under the framework of a COP for the first time. They will help redesign the relationship between policymakers, the biggest energy producers, and the biggest industrial consumers. This is one of my Presidency's key priorities and will be a crucial step in building consensus on how best to deliver the energy system of the future."

IEA Executive Director Dr. Fatih Birol said: "The IEA has put forward a comprehensive energy package that can help make COP28 a success. This includes tripling global renewables capacity, doubling energy efficiency progress, slashing emissions from the oil and gas industry, boosting clean energy

finance for developing economies, redirecting fossil fuel investment into clean energy, and putting fossil fuel demand into sharp decline.

"The IEA's Net Zero Emissions by 2050 Scenario is widely recognized as the global benchmark for efforts to keep the 1.5C goal within reach, so we are pleased to be working with the COP28 Presidency to lead these important international dialogues to drive stronger ambition and implementation, which is what is urgently needed. Every stakeholder must play their part - including oil and gas producers, which need to set out and deliver on aggressive targets to cut their emissions by 2030."

Collective

Francesco La Camera, Director General of IRENA, said: "Our collective promise was to secure a climate-safe existence for current and future generations. We simply cannot continue with incremental changes. There is no time for a new energy system to evolve gradually over centuries, as was the case for the fossil fuel-based system. IRENA centres the renewables-based energy transition as the most realistic climate solution and calls for a tripling of annual renewable energy additions to keep global warming within 1.5C."

"Achieving this requires overcoming systemic barriers across infrastructure, policy, and institutional settings in the coming years. The high-level dialogues will play an important role in galvanizing momentum towards the energy objectives of COP28, driving actionable policies and investment decisions through a shared understanding."

The IEA and IRENA will provide data and technical analysis to set the stage for informed discussions, inviting others as appropriate. This will include the current state of the global energy landscape, and potential pathways, solutions and actions required to accelerate the transition in a just and equitable manner.

Simon Steill, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, "These high-level dialogues convened by the COP28 Presidency and the IEA, with the collaborative efforts of IRENA and support of the UNFCCC, should act as a catalyst to drive momentum towards a just and inclusive 1.5 degree-aligned energy transition. It is my hope that these dialogues will pave the way for specific commitments and actions by Parties at COP 28, bringing us all closer to the sustainable and climate-resilient future that is called for in the Paris Agreement. It's time for decisive action from all stakeholders."

For all media enquiries and requests for interviews, please contact media@cop28.com. For up to date COP28 news, follow us on Twitter @COP28_UAE.

Turkish president confident of Black Sea Grain Deal extension

Russia preparing for attacks on civilian ships in Black Sea: US

WASHINGTON, July 22, (Agencies): Days after Russia suspended participation in a wartime deal that allowed grain to flow from Ukraine to countries around the world, the White House on Wednesday warned that the Russian military is preparing for possible attacks on civilian shipping vessels in the Black Sea.

Since leaving the Black Sea Grain Deal this week, Russia has already struck Ukraine's grain export ports in Odesa with missile and drone attacks. Some 60,000 tons of grain were destroyed in the attacks.

"Our information indicates that Russia laid additional sea mines in the approaches to Ukrainian ports," White House National Security Council spokesman Adam Hodge said in a statement. "We believe that this is a coordinated effort to justify any attacks against civilian ships in the Black Sea and lay blame on Ukraine for these attacks."

The Russian Defense Ministry has declared international waters in north-western and southeastern parts of the

Black Sea "temporarily dangerous" for shipping. That followed Ukraine's pledge to continue grain shipments despite the Russian pullout from the deal.

The ministry warned it will see any incoming vessel as laden with military cargo.

Meanwhile, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he is confident of the extension of the Black Sea Grain Deal for exporting Ukraine's grains to the world.

Confident

"I am confident that by thoroughly discussing the issue with Russian President Vladimir Putin the Black Grain Sea Deal will be extended," Erdogan affirmed in a press statement on Friday.

He made it clear that he would deliberate the issue of extending the grain agreement with President Putin, either through a phone call or during his expected visit to Türkiye next month.

He stressed that Russia had some demands in the agreement and if they were met, it would agree on resuming

the deal.

"Terminating the grain deal will have grave consequences (on the World) similar to that of a drought and could cause new waves of migration," the Turkish leader warned, vowing that Türkiye would not hesitate to take all necessary action to avoid this destiny.

He stated that more than 33 million tons of Ukraine's grains were transported to global markets through the grain deal which helped prevent a global food crisis. President Erdogan asserted that his country would mobilize all diplomatic potential to salvage the grain agreement.

On Monday, Russia announced withdrawing from the UN and Türkiye-mediated deal, saying its conditions and demands were not implemented.

The foreign ministers of Ukraine and Pakistan called Thursday for the restoration of the Black Sea grain initiative to ensure global food security, days after Russia halted the wartime deal that had allowed grain to flow from Ukraine.

The two sides made the demand at a news conference after Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba met with his Pakistani counterpart Bilawal Bhutto Zardari after arriving on his first visit to the Islamic nation.

Kuleba also met with Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, according to a government statement. It quoted Sharif saying that the conflict in Ukraine has had a significant global impact that has hurt the economies of many countries.

Kuleba briefed Sharif on the current situation in Ukraine, recalling that their countries had always enjoyed long-standing and cordial relations grounded in cooperation and friendship with the common objective to contribute towards global peace and regional stability.

Pakistan has been a regular importer of wheat from Kyiv in recent years - as much as 1 million tons in 2021 by Kuleba's estimate. The grain deal, negotiated in July 2022 among Turkey, the UN and Russia, had allowed grain to flow to countries in Asia, the Mid-

dle East and Africa where hunger is a growing threat and high food prices have pushed more people into poverty.

Russia announced Monday it was pulling out of the deal, and on Wednesday, Russian strikes on Ukraine's southern port areas destroyed some of its critical grain export infrastructure as well as 60,000 tons of grain that was designated for China.

Kuleba said at the news conference that the Russian strikes mean "60,000 tons of grain will never make it to the people who want to buy bread at a reasonable price and as prices go up."

Progress

Kuleba said his country has made some progress in improving land corridors for exporting its grain but that the best way remains by sea. He said Russia wanted to replace Ukrainian grain on the global market, and that "Russia is increasing its exports of grain, making more money for its war machine."

Kuleba thanked Pakistan for providing his country with humanitarian aid

when it was most needed and at a time when Pakistan itself was struggling economically. "But this is what friends do, they help each other in times of the greatest need," Kuleba said.

Both foreign ministers underlined their countries' desire to continue the Black Sea grain deal. Bhutto-Zardari said he would contact representatives of the UN, Turkey and Russia to discuss the matter.

"We believe that prolonged conflict brings immense hardship and suffering to civilian populations. We hope, therefore, that peace will prevail so that the people of Ukraine and Russia can enjoy peace dividends," the Pakistani foreign minister said. Bhutto-Zardari said Pakistan is ready to support peace initiatives.

"The Ukraine conflict has also brought difficulties for developing countries and the Global South, particularly in terms of fuel, food and fertilizer shortages. Pakistan is no exception. We, therefore, have a vested interest in promoting peace and reconciliation," Bhutto-Zardari said.



Russian President Vladimir Putin chairs a Security Council meeting via videoconference in Moscow, Russia, Friday, July 21. (AP)

‘Putin’s deal pullout a gamble’

Russia risks alienating its few ‘remaining’ partners

WASHINGTON, July 22: By pulling out of a landmark deal that allowed Ukrainian grain exports through the Black Sea, Russian President Vladimir Putin is taking a gamble that could badly damage Moscow's relations with many of its partners that have stayed neutral or even been supportive of the Kremlin's invasion of its neighbor.

Russia also has played the role of spoiler at the United Nations, vetoing a resolution on extending humanitarian aid deliveries through a key border crossing in northwestern Syria and backing a push by Mali's military junta to expel U.N. peacekeepers - abrupt moves that reflect Moscow's readiness to raise the stakes elsewhere.

Putin's declared goal in halting the Black Sea Grain Initiative was to win relief from Western sanctions on Russia's agricultural exports. His longer-term goal could be to erode Western resolve over Ukraine and get more concessions from the US and its allies as the war grinds toward the 17-month mark.

The Kremlin doubled down on terminating the grain deal by attacking Ukrainian ports and declaring wide areas of the Black Sea unsafe for shipping.

But with the West showing little willingness to yield any ground, Putin's actions not only threaten global food security but also could backfire against Russia's own interests, potentially causing concern in China, straining Moscow's relations with key partner Turkey and hurting its ties with African countries.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who helped broker the grain deal with the UN a year ago, has pushed for its extension and said he would negotiate with Putin.

Turkey's role as a top trading partner and a logistical hub for Russia's foreign trade amid Western sanctions strengthens Erdogan's hand and could allow him to squeeze concessions from Putin, whom he calls "my dear friend."

Sanctions

Turkey's trade with Russia nearly doubled last year to \$68.2 billion, feeding US suspicions that Moscow is using Ankara to bypass Western sanctions. Turkey says the increase is largely due to higher energy costs.

Their relationship is often characterized as transactional. Despite being on opposing sides in fighting in Syria, Libya and the decades-long conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, they have cooperated in areas like energy, defense, diplomacy, tourism and trade.

Ozgur Unluhisarcikli, director of the German Marshall Fund in Ankara, said the relationship's dual nature dates back to the sultans and czars.

"Sometimes they compete, sometimes they cooperate. At other times they both compete and cooperate at the same time," he said.

While the pendulum seems to have swung in Ankara's favor for now, Unluhisarcikli noted the Kremlin has a few levers to pull, such as canceling a deferment of gas payments or removing financial capital for the Akkuyu nuclear plant being built by Russia. Moscow also could hurt Turkey by restricting Russian tourists, who visit in greater numbers than any other nationality, offering a steady flow of cash.

"How much weaker the relationship gets depends on how Russia responds to Turkey getting closer to the West," he said.

Some observers in Moscow speculate that Russia agreed to extend the

grain deal for two months in May to help Erdogan win reelection but was appalled to see his pro-Western shift afterward.

Erdogan backed Sweden's membership in NATO earlier this month. In another snub to Moscow, Turkey allowed several Ukrainian commanders who led the defense of Mariupol last year to return home. They surrendered after a two-month Russian siege and then moved to Turkey under a deal that they stay there until the end of the war.

Kerim Has, a Moscow-based expert on Turkey-Russia ties, said Erdogan had been emboldened by his reelection to pursue rapprochement with the West, appointing a "pro-Western" Cabinet and adopting a stance that was causing "discomfort" in the Kremlin.

Dilemma

"It's a dilemma for Putin," Has said. "He supported Erdogan's candidacy but he will face a more active, pro-Western Turkey under Erdogan in the coming period."

Moscow could try to pressure Erdogan by challenging Turkey's interests in northwestern Syria, where Ankara has backed armed opposition groups since the start of the conflict. Even though Russia has joined with Iran to shore up Syrian President Bashar Assad's government while Turkey has backed its foes, Moscow and Ankara have negotiated cease-fire deals.

But Russia abruptly toughened its stand this month when it vetoed a U.N. Security Council resolution backed by virtually all members to continue humanitarian aid deliveries to opposition-held areas through the Bab el-Hawa border crossing with Turkey, a key lifeline for about 4.1 million people in the impoverished enclave. Moscow warned that if its rival draft was not accepted, the crossing would be shut.

The presence of 3.4 million Syrians in Turkey is a sensitive issue for Ankara. Erdogan has advocated their voluntary repatriation to parts of northern Syria under Turkish control.

Dareen Khalifa, senior analyst on Syria at the International Crisis Group, says Russia's hard-line approach to the issue was an attempt to pressure Ankara.

"Turkey will be directly impacted by that if the mechanism ends," he said.

Others were skeptical Russia could use the border crossing issue to strong-arm Ankara. "I do not think Russia is in a position to increase its pressure on Turkey in Syria," Has said.

Joseph Daher, a Swiss-Syrian researcher and professor at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy, observed that Russia could be trying to pressure the West by raising the prospect of a new wave of refugees in Europe.

Richard Gowan, UN director of the International Crisis Group, noted that along with the tougher stand on Syria, Russia's "disruptive" actions included support for Mali's push to expel UN peacekeepers.

"It looks like Russia is looking for ways to annoy the West through the UN," he told The Associated Press.

Reflecting Moscow's increasingly muscular stand, Russian military pilots recently have harassed US aircraft over Syria in incidents that added to tensions between Moscow and Washington. The Pentagon described Russia's maneuvers as unprofessional and unsafe, while Moscow sought to turn the tables by accusing the US of violating deconfliction rules intended to prevent collisions over Syria.

LONDON, July 22 (AP): Russia has repeatedly fired missiles and drones at Ukrainian ports key to sending grain to the world. Moscow has declared large swaths of the Black Sea dangerous for shipping. Even the US said ships are at risk of being targeted.

There is still interest from ship owners in carrying Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea - if they can mitigate the risk, according to a major shipping group. And that's a big if.

Despite the warnings and port attacks, which have leveled grain infrastructure, "shipping has always been very, very resilient in the face of these sorts of risks," said John Stawpert, senior manager of environment and trade for the International Chamber of Shipping, which represents 80% of the world's commercial fleet.

This week's strikes came after Russia pulled out of a wartime accord that the UN and Turkey brokered last year to provide safeguards for shipping companies in a bid to end a global food crisis. Ukraine - which, along with Russia, is a major supplier of wheat, barley and vegetable oil to developing nations - shipped 32.9 million metric tons of grain to the world and supplied 80% of the World Food Program's wheat for humanitarian aid so far this year.

Following the grain deal's collapse, Ukraine sent a letter to the UN International Maritime Organization establishing its own temporary shipping corridor, saying it would "provide guarantees of compensation for damage."

But Russia warned this week that ships traversing parts of the Black Sea would assume to be carrying weapons to Ukraine. In a seeming tit-for-tat move, Ukraine said vessels heading to Russian Black Sea ports would be considered "carrying military cargo with all the associated risks."

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Vershinin said Friday that the navy will check vessels to ensure they are not carrying weapons before taking other action.

Damage

Continued shipments from Ukraine will depend on vessels getting insurance for potential damage or injuries and deaths to crew members and how the safety risks play out. Ships that were exporting Ukrainian grain can be worth tens of millions of dollars, have 20 to 22 sailors on board and carry food also worth tens of millions, according to Jayendu Krishna, deputy head of maritime advisers at Drewry, a maritime research consultancy.

AH-ships go through threat assessments to allow crews to protect against problems before setting sail, which have grown in importance as ships deal with piracy, terrorism and war zones.

For the Black Sea, the risks for ships would be: explosive mines, becoming collateral damage at ports or being targeted themselves, which Stawpert said would be "a huge escalation."

"The million-dollar question is whether the threats to merchant shipping are serious and whether they'll be followed through. And there's no firm way of knowing that until it actually happens," Stawpert said, adding that he has not yet heard from insurers.

With Russia's warnings, "it is unlikely that underwriters will want to cover that risk," said the International Union of Marine Insurance, which represents national and international marine insurers.

The group thought it was unlikely



Workers load grain at a grain port in Izmail, Ukraine, April 26, 2023. (AP)

Some are interested

Ukraine wants to continue its grain shipments despite Russian attacks



The UN Security Council meets to discuss the maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine, Friday, July 21, at United Nations headquarters. (AP)

‘Catastrophic consequences’

Russia under pressure at UN to avoid global food crisis and revive grain deal

UNITED NATIONS, July 22, (AP): Russia came under pressure at the UN Security Council on Friday from its ally China and developing countries as well as Western nations to avert a global food crisis and quickly revive Ukrainian grain shipments.

Moscow was also criticized by the UN and council members for attacking Ukrainian ports after pulling out of the year-old grain deal and destroying port infrastructure - a violation of international humanitarian law banning attacks on civilian infrastructure.

In response to Russia declaring wide areas in the Black Sea dangerous for shipping, the UN warned that a military incident in the sea could have "catastrophic consequences."

Russia said it suspended the Black Sea Grain Initiative because the UN had failed to overcome obstacles to shipping its food and fertilizer to global markets, the other half of the Ukraine grain deal. The Kremlin said it would consider resuming Ukrainian shipments if progress is made in overcoming the obstacles, including in banking arrangements.

China's deputy UN ambassador Geng Shuang noted UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' commitment to make every effort to ensure that both Ukrainian grain and Russian food and fertilizer get to world markets. He expressed hope that Russia and the UN will work together to resume exports from both countries "at an early date" in the interest of "maintaining international food security and alleviating the food crisis in developing countries in particular."

US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield accused Russia of using the Black Sea as "blackmail" and playing

political games, pointing to Moscow's export of more grain than ever before at higher prices. She called on the Security Council and all 193 UN member nations to come together and urge Russia to resume negotiations in good faith.

Several developing countries warned of the impact of the cutoff in Ukrainian grain shipments, which has already led to a rise in wheat prices.

Gabon's UN Ambassador Michel Biang said the grain deal had avoided a spark in grain prices and calmed the risk of food insecurity in the drought-affected Horn of Africa and other regions. He urged talks "to break the current deadlock" and avoid a humanitarian crisis.

Action

Mozambique's UN Ambassador Pedro Afonso said Russia's action is certain "to amplify global socio-economic stresses in a world already grappling with a perfect storm of conflict, climate change" and a loss of confidence in multilateral solutions.

Russia's deputy U.N. ambassador Dmitry Polyansky said Russia stands ready to consider rejoining the deal if seven principles from the Russia-U.N. memorandum are implemented. He listed them as "the real not theoretical" lifting of Western sanctions on Russian grain and fertilizer exports, and the lifting of obstacles to Russian banks that service exports, including the immediate connection to the SWIFT global banking system.

Russia also wants the delivery of spare parts for agricultural production to resume, a resolution to issues related to chartering vessels for Rus-

sian exports including insurance, the war-damaged ammonia pipeline from Russia to Ukraine to be fixed and other fertilizer issues resolved, Russian assets linked to agricultural production unfrozen, and "the resumption of the initial humanitarian nature of the grain deal," he said.

Under the deal, Ukraine was given a green light to ship grain from three Black Sea ports, but following Monday's withdrawal Russia said it will consider a ship traveling to Ukrainian ports as being laden with weapons and will treat the country of its flag as a participant in the conflict on Kyiv's side. Ukraine announced that it will also treat ships traveling to Russian Black Sea ports as military targets.

Thomas-Greenfield told the council the United States has information that Russia laid additional sea mines in the approaches to Ukrainian ports and that Russia's military may attack civilian shipping in the Black Sea "and lay blame on Ukraine for these attacks."

UN political chief Rosemary DiCarlo strongly condemned Russian attacks on Ukraine's Black Sea ports and urged Moscow to stop them immediately. She said threats to target civilian vessels "are unacceptable" and warned that sea mines can endanger civilian navigation.

"We strongly urge restraint from any further rhetoric or action that could deteriorate the already dangerous situation," she said. "Any risk of conflict spillover as a result of a military incident in the Black Sea - whether intentional or by accident - must be avoided at all costs, as this could result in potentially catastrophic consequences to us all."

owners would put their ships and crews in danger, echoed by Munro Anderson, head of operations for Vessel Protect, which assesses war risks at sea and provides insurance with backing from Lloyd's, whose members make up the world's largest insurance marketplace.

He didn't directly speak to whether underwriting businesses like his would take on the risk but said without protections for ships like they had under the grain deal, "safety conditions cannot be guaranteed."

Krishna said the only way to mitigate risk was through insurance from the 12 providers making up the International Group of P&I Clubs, which offers liability coverage for about 90% of the world's cargo shipped by sea, according to its website.

"P&I clubs will be wary of even insuring" without a guarantee from the U.N. or some other body, he said.

The International Group of P&I Clubs said its CEO was the only one who could comment and that he was on vacation. Individual clubs either declined to comment or did not respond to calls or emails.

The head of the seafarers division of the International Transport Workers' Federation, a union for crew members, said the question should be whether it's too risky right now to ask sailors to go to Ukrainian ports.

"The minds of seafarers won't be on questions of insurance cover, but more likely on whether their lives are safe amidst the fighting," David Heindel said in a statement, adding that crews "should never be targeted just for doing their job."

In the meantime, some analysts expect most of what Ukraine was going to ship through the Black Sea will get out by road, rail and river through Europe, but the transportation costs will be higher and likely lead to lower production by Ukrainian farmers.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said Thursday that Ukraine has made progress in improving those routes but that the best way to export grain is through the Black Sea. That's how 75% of the country's grain got to the world before the war, analysts say.

Plus, the routes have created divisions in the European Union, with five countries saying Wednesday that they want to extend a ban on Ukrainian grain imports through the end of the year.

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Actors, writers seek legal and creative control

AI technology is the wild card in Hollywood’s strikes

LOS ANGELES, July 22, (AP): Artificial intelligence has surged to the forefront of Hollywood’s labor fights. Standing alongside more traditional disputes over pay models, benefits and job protections, AI technology is the wild card in the contract breakdowns that have led actors and writers unions to go on strike.

The technology has pushed negotiations into unknown territory, and the language used can sound utopian or dystopian depending on the side of the table. Here’s a look at what the unions and their employers each say they want.

As the technology to create without creators emerges, star actors fear they will lose control of their lucrative likenesses. Unknown actors fear they’ll be replaced altogether. Writers fear they’ll have to share credit or lose credit to machines.

The proposed contracts that led to both strikes last only three years. Even at the seeming breakneck pace at which AI is moving, it’s very unlikely there would be any widespread displacement of writers or actors in that time. But unions and employers know that ground given on an issue in one contract can be hard to reclaim in the next.

Emerging versions of the tech have already filtered into nearly every part of filmmaking, used to de-age actors like Harrison Ford in the latest “Indiana Jones” film or Mark Hamill in “The Mandalorian,” to generate the abstracted animated images of Samuel L. Jackson and a swirl of several aliens in the intro to “Secret Invasion” on Disney+, and to give recommendations on Netflix.

All sides in the strikes acknowledge that use of the technology even more broadly is inevitable. That’s why all are looking now to establish legal and creative control.

Actor and writer Johnathan McClain said the battle echoes fights

over automation across other industries, but foretells many more to come as tech becomes better.

AI discussions between the Screen Actors Guild–American Federation of Television and Radio Artists and the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, which represents employers, went from a theoretical framework to a bitter battle that spilled into the public when the strike broke out July 13.

In a description widely shared by outraged actors on social media, SAG-AFTRA released this characterization of the studios’ AI position, which the AMPTP called a deliberate distortion:

Likeness

“We want to be able to scan a background performer’s image, pay them for a half a day’s labor, and then use an individual’s likeness for any purpose forever without their consent,” the union said. “We also want to be able to make changes to principal performers’ dialogue, and even create new scenes, without informed consent. And we want to be able to use someone’s images, likenesses, and performances to train new generative AI systems without consent or compensation.”

The AMPTP said in a statement in response that its offers included an “AI proposal which protects performers’ digital likenesses, including a requirement for performers’ consent for the creation and use of digital replicas or for digital alterations of a performance.”

SAG-AFTRA used similar language in describing what they wanted, emphasizing the need to protect “human-created work” including alterations to the “voice, likeness or performance” of an actor.

It may be fitting that “voice” comes first on that list. While many

viewers still cringe at the visual avatars of actors like Hamill and Jackson, the aural tech feels further along.

The voices of the late Anthony Bourdain and the late Andy Warhol have both been recreated for recent documentaries.

Union members who make a living doing voiceovers have taken note.

In screenwriters’ contract talks, which broke down in early May, the Writers Guild of America said it would allow for the use of AI — but only insofar as it was a tool for them to use in their own work.

They would be willing, potentially, to shape stories with help from AI software. But they do not want it to affect the credits that are essential to their prestige and pay.

The guild wants to prevent raw, AI-generated storylines or dialogue from being regarded as “literary material” — a term in their contracts for scripts and other story forms a screenwriter produces. This means they wouldn’t be competing with computers for credit — or for an original screenplay Oscar.

The writers also don’t want those storylines or dialogue to be considered “source material” — their contractual language for the novels, video games or other works that writers may develop into scripts.

The AMPTP said in a document outlining its position that writers “want to be able to use this technology as part of their creative process, without changing how credits are determined, which is complicated given AI material can’t be copyrighted.”

The studios also emphasized that previous writers’ contracts established that any “corporate or impersonal purveyor” of literary is not a screenwriter.

“Only a ‘person’ can be considered a writer,” the AMPTP said. “AI-generated material would not be eligible for writing credit.”

Variety



This image released by Universal Pictures shows Cillian Murphy in a scene from ‘Oppenheimer.’ (AP)

Film

Nolan’s latest opus is most human-scaled film

A bomb & its fallout in ‘Oppenheimer’

By Jake Coyle

Christopher Nolan’s “Oppenheimer” is a kinetic thing of dark, imposing beauty that quakes with the disquieting tremors of a forever rupture in the course of human history.

“Oppenheimer,” a feverish three-hour immersion in the life of Manhattan Project mastermind J. Robert Oppenheimer (Cillian Murphy), is poised between the shock and aftershock of the terrible revelation, as one character calls it, of a divine power.

There are times in Nolan’s latest opus that flames fill the frame and visions of subatomic particles flitter across the screen - montages of Oppenheimer’s own churning visions. But for all the immensity of “Oppenheimer,” this is Nolan’s most human-scaled film - and one of his greatest achievements.

It’s told principally in close-ups, which, even in the towering detail of IMAX 70mm, can’t resolve the vast paradoxes of Oppenheimer. He was said to be a magnetic man with piercing blue eyes (Murphy has those in spades) who became the father of the atomic bomb but, in speaking against nuclear proliferation and the hydrogen bomb, emerged as America’s postwar conscience.

Nolan, writing his own adaptation of Martin J. Sherwin and Kai Bird’s Pulitzer Prize-winning 2005 book “American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer,” layers the build-up to the Manhattan Project with two moments from years later.

In 1954, a probing inquiry into Oppenheimer’s leftist politics by a McCarthy-era Atomic Energy Commission stripped him of his security clearance. This provides the frame of “Oppenheimer,” along with a Senate confirmation hearing for Lewis Strauss (Robert Downey Jr.), who chaired the Atomic Energy Commission and was a stealthy nemesis to Oppenheimer.

The grubby, political machinations of these hearings - the Strauss section is captured in black and white - act like a stark X-ray of Oppenheimer’s life. It’s an often brutal, unfair interrogation that weighs Oppenheimer’s decisions and accomplishment, inevitably, in moral terms. “Who’d want to justify their whole life?” some-

one wonders. For the maker of the world’s most lethal weapon, it’s an especially complicated question.

These separate timelines give “Oppenheimer” - dimly lit and shadowy even in the desert - a noirish quality in reckoning with a physicist who spent the first half of his life in headlong pursuit of a new science and the second half wrestling with the consequences of his colossal, world-altering invention.

“Oppenheimer” moves too fast to come to any neat conclusions. Nolan, as if reaching to match the electron, dives into the story at a blistering pace. From start to finish, “Oppenheimer” buzzes with a heady frequency, tracking Oppenheimer as a promising student in the then-unfolding field of quantum mechanics. “Can you hear the music, Robert?” asks the elder Danish physicist Niels Bohr (Kenneth Branagh). He can, absolutely, but that doesn’t mean finding harmony.

Complexity

Nolan, whose last film was the time-traveling, palindrome-rich “Tenet,” may be the only filmmaker for whom delving into quantum mechanics could be considered a step down in complexity. But “Oppenheimer” is less interested in equations than the chemistry of an expanding mind. Oppenheimer reads “The Waste Land” and looks at modernist painting. He dabbles in the communist thinking of the day. But he aligns with no single cause. “I like a little wiggle room,” says Oppenheimer.

For a filmmaker synonymous with grand architectures - psychologies mapped onto subconscious worlds (“Inception”) and cosmic reaches (“Interstellar”) - “Oppenheimer” resides more simply in its subject’s fertile imagination and anguished psyche. Nolan and cinematographer Hoyte van Hoytema render Oppenheimer’s interiority with flashes of images that stretch across the heavens. His brilliance comes from his limitlessness of thought.

Just how much “wiggle room” Oppenheimer is permitted, though, becomes a more acute point when war breaks out and he’s tasked by Lt. Gen. Leslie Groves Jr. (Matt Damon) to lead the race to beat the Nazis to an

atomic bomb. The rapid building of Los Alamos on the white-sand mesas of New Mexico - a site chosen by and with personal meaning to Oppenheimer - might not be so different than the erecting of movie sets for Nolan’s massive films, which likewise tend to culminate with a spectacular explosion.

There is something inherently queasy about a big-screen spectacle dramatizing the creation - justified or not - of a weapon of mass destruction. Oppenheimer once called the atomic bomb “a weapon for aggressors” wherein “the elements of surprise and terror are as intrinsic to it as are the fissionable nuclei.” Surely a less imperial, leviathan filmmaker than Nolan - a British director making an American epic - might have approached the subject differently.

But the responsibility of power has long been one of Nolan’s chief subjects. And “Oppenheimer” is consumed with not just the ethical quandary of the Manhattan Project but every ethical quandary that Oppenheimer encounters. Big or small, they could all lead to valor or damnation. What makes “Oppenheimer” so unnerving is how indistinguishable one is from the other.

“Oppenheimer” sticks almost entirely to its protagonist’s point of view yet also populates its three-hour film with an incredible array of faces, all in exquisite detail. Some of the best are Benny Safdie as the hydrogen bomb designer Edward Teller; Jason Clarke as gruff special counsel Roger Robb; Gary Oldman as President Harry Truman; Alden Ehrenreich as an aide to Strauss; Macon Blair as Oppenheimer’s attorney; and Emily Blunt as Kitty Oppenheimer, the physicist’s wife.

The greatest of all of them, though, is Murphy. The actor, a Nolan regular, has always been able to communicate something more disturbing underneath his angular, angelic features. But here, his Oppenheimer is a fascinating coil of contradictions; determined and aloof, present and far-away, brilliant but blind.

Dread hangs over him, and over the film, with the inevitable. The future, post-Hiroshima, is sounded most by the wail of children who will grow up in that world; the Oppenheimers’ babies do nothing but cry. (AP)

KEY WEST, Fla: Almost 140 bearded men who resemble Ernest Hemingway converged on Key West, the late author’s home during the 1930s, to compete in the Hemingway Look-Alike Contest that began Thursday evening.

The challenge is a highlight of the island’s Hemingway Days festival that salutes the literary talent and adventurous life of the Nobel Prize-winning writer.

During his Key West years, Hemingway penned classics including “For Whom the Bell Tolls” and “To Have and Have Not.”

The three-night look-alike competition is held at Sloppy Joe’s Bar, where Hemingway often spent time with local and literary friends.

Closely observed by a judging panel of previous winners including 2022’s Jon Auvil, of Dade City, Florida, contestants take turns pontificating and parading across Sloppy Joe’s stage.

Many are repeat contenders who bring their own cheering sections, and most attempt to copy the “Papa” persona and appearance adopted by Hemingway in his later years.

The contest’s second preliminary round was set for Friday, the 124th anniversary of Hemingway’s July 21 birth, and the 2023 winner is set to be chosen Saturday night.

Hemingway Days continues through Sunday with events including a quirky “Running of the Bulls” spoof, a street fair and the Key West Marlin Tournament that recalls the author’s passion for Florida Keys fishing. (AP)

□ □ □

IRMO, SC: Author Ta-Nehisi Coates sat silently through a school board meeting in South Carolina to support a high school teacher told to stop using his book on growing up Black in America in her advanced English class.

Mary Wood has taught the lesson before, but after a few of her Chapin High School students wrote a school board member in February that the unit made them feel “uncomfortable” and “ashamed to be Caucasian” the

books were taken up and the assignment ended.

Coates wrote his 2015 book “Between the World and Me” as a letter to his teenage son on his perceptions of the feelings and circumstances of being Black in America and how racism and violence based on skin color are part of American society.



Hemingway



Coates

Wood asked her Advanced Placement English students to read the book and watch two videos on systemic racism she used to introduce it, then identify the themes of the works and discuss their thoughts, including whether they disagree with Coates’ view.

Records from the Lexington-

Richland 5 school district indicate officials were worried the assignment could run afoul of a rule in the South Carolina budget banning schools from using state money to teach that anyone is consciously or unconsciously racist simply by their race and preventing lessons from making anyone feel discomfort, guilt or

anguish based on their race.

Republicans have used the well-publicized provision to threaten other school districts in the state and one student who complained about the lesson wrote they were “pretty sure a teacher talking about systemic racism is illegal in South Carolina.” (AP)

People & Places

People

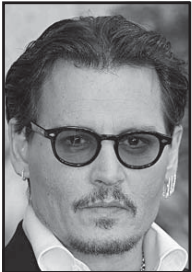
‘Painting on sale’

Depp paints emotions in debut ‘self-portrait’

LONDON, July 22, (AP): **Johnny Depp** has painted the emotions of recent years into a self-portrait and is offering the result for sale as a time-limited edition.

The actor began working on the piece, titled “Five,” around 2021 in the midst of an explosive dispute with his ex-wife, Amber Heard, which played out in courtrooms on both sides of the Atlantic.

“I think this is the most personal piece he’s ever done,” said Ian Weatherby-Blythe, managing director of Castle Fine Art, which is handling the sale of “Five.” The gallery also oversaw Depp’s sold-out debut art collection, the series of portraits “Friends & Heroes.”



Depp

“He revisited the eyes over and over and over again. And when you look at the piece, you know, it’s a beautiful portrait. But when you look at the eyes there’s something very meaningful behind the eyes, there’s something, you know, quite sad.”

“It was created at a time that was, let’s say, a bit dark, a bit confusing,” Depp said in a video released Thursday to promote the sale.

“Essentially, I just wrote ‘Five’ on there because I was just about to enter the fifth year of the madness.”

Priced from £1,950 (\$1,950), signed editions of “Five” go on sale at 1600 GMT Thursday for 13 days.

Heard filed for divorce in May 2016, seeking a temporary restraining order against the “Pirates of the Caribbean” star.

In April 2022, Depp began a libel trial he brought against Heard, based on a 2018 Washington Post op-ed piece in which she referred to herself as “a public figure representing domestic abuse.” A Virginia jury eventually ruled that Heard had defamed Depp on three counts and awarded him \$15 million in damages. In a countersuit, Depp was found guilty of one charge of libel and Heard was awarded \$2 million.

Painful

A British court had ruled in 2020 that a tabloid article labeling Depp “a wife beater” was “substantially true.” Soon after the ruling in the UK, Hollywood largely cut ties with Depp, jettisoning him from both the “Fantastic Beasts” and “Pirates of the Caribbean” franchises.

Fashion house Dior, Depp notes, “as much as it was painful ... stuck to their guns,” and “Five” uses as a starting point the photograph that launched his Dior Sauvage campaign, led by creative director Jean-Baptiste Mondino.

A few months ago, Depp went back to the artwork, and after making adjustments, decided to publicly share what he views as an act of creative healing.

Using archival pigment, in the style of his earlier series of portraits, “Five” marks the first time Depp has sought to capture his own image. A smaller artwork, with a lower price tag, “Five” is described as deliberately intimate and shows the actor in a state of emotional exhaustion.

“It’s not the most comfortable thing doing a self-portrait,” Depp said, noting he would sit with a mirror and sketch himself in different lights, times and angles.

“It should just be some expression, spit it out as it gets spit out.”

He also intends to sign “each and every one,” said Weatherby-Blythe. “He’s made that commitment, he wants to give the opportunity to as many people as possible to buy his art and also he wants to try to raise as much money as he can for Mental Health America,” he added. From the proceeds of each sale, \$200 is to be donated to the non-profit.

Depp may have won in court, but public opinion remains divided on the actor who was once one of the most bankable stars in movies.

Weatherby-Blythe believes there will be interest from art collectors as well as the stars’ supporters.

“I think Johnny still has many, many fans out there. But I’m also hoping that art buyers will see it as a one-off work of art,” he said, pointing out that the actor has “painted and drawn his entire life, and I think that art connoisseurs will see that. ... And this piece is a very, very special, very personal piece.”

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Sean “Diddy” Combs wants to strengthen the Black dollar: The music mogul is spearheading a new online marketplace called Empower Global that will specifically feature Black-owned businesses.

“I want to create our own Black Wall Street,” Combs told The Associated Press about his e-commerce platform, which launched last week. He feels passionate about building substantial wealth in his community similar to the Greenwood community, the thriving Black-owned business district in **Tulsa, Oklahoma**, that was decimated in a two-day attack by a white mob in Oklahoma in 1921.

Combs said he’s not looking for financial benefit after he invested \$20 million into Empower Global, which allows consumers to purchase products exclusively created and sold by Black entrepreneurs.

The curated marketplace featuring Black-owned brands will allow consumers to purchase clothing, shoes, beauty accessories including skin care and fragrances, and even wall art. The platform was designed and created by two Black-owned companies, Tech-Sparq and ChatDesk.

The platform launched with 70 brands with plans to introduce new Black businesses monthly. He hopes to showcase more than 200 brands by the end of the year.

“This is about building our own infrastructure and ecosystem,” Combs said. “I’m not doing this for profit. This is about us.”

Combs said he feels more excited about launching into Empower Global than before the start of his widely-popular label Bad Boy Records.

“I’m going into these areas to diversify things and fight for our inclusion. This is a platform about sharing power and empowering each other,” he said. “This is something that is for my people. It’s a tipping point for us to wake up start paying attention and supporting each other while taking responsibility and accountability.”

Combs, who’s worked on the platform for years, said it’s important for Black people to circulate money in their own community.

“It benefits the community to empower and take care of itself,” he said. “Right now, our dollar in the Black community doesn’t even last an hour. Most other communities and ethnic groups, they understand the power of unity. Their dollars stay in their communities for days and get passed on to other people that are like them and from their same community.”



Tony Bennett reacts after performing the song ‘I left My Heart in San Francisco’ during his 80th birthday celebration at the Kodak Theater in Los Angeles, on Nov. 9, 2006. Bennett, the eminent and timeless stylist whose devotion to classic American songs and knack for creating new standards, graced a decadeslong career that brought him admirers from Frank Sinatra to Lady Gaga, died Friday, July 21, 2023. He was 96. (AP)

Obituary

Masterful stylist of American musical standards

Legendary singer Bennett dies

Friends & admirers of Tony Bennett react to his death

NEW YORK, July 22, (AP): Tony Bennett, the eminent stylist whose devotion to classic American songs and knack for creating new standards graced a decadeslong career that brought him admirers from Frank Sinatra to Lady Gaga, died Friday. He was 96.

Publicist Sylvia Weiner confirmed Bennett’s death to The Associated Press, saying he died in New York. There was no specific cause, but Bennett was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease in 2016.

Bennett often said his lifelong ambition was to create “a hit catalog rather than hit records,” which he accomplished through more than 70 albums, garnering 19 Grammys - all but two after he reached his 60s. If his singing and public life lacked the emotional drama of Sinatra’s, Bennett appealed with an easy, courtly manner and an uncommonly rich and durable tenor that made him a master of caressing a ballad or brightening an up-tempo number.

“I enjoy entertaining the audience, making them forget their problems,” he told the AP in 2006. “I think people ... are touched if they hear something that’s sincere and honest and maybe has a little sense of humor. ... I just like to make people feel good when I perform.”

Bennett received many accolades from fellow singers, but none so meaningful than when his friend and mentor Sinatra said in a 1965 Life magazine interview: “For my money, Tony Bennett is the best singer in the business. He excites me when I watch him. He moves me. He’s the singer who gets across what the composer has in mind, and probably a little more.”

Record

In 2014, at age 88, Bennett broke his own record as the oldest living performer with a No. 1 album on the Billboard 200 chart for “Cheek to Cheek,” his collaboration with Lady Gaga. Three years earlier, he topped the charts with “Duets II,” featuring such contemporary pop stars as Gaga, Carrie Underwood, and Amy Winehouse in her last studio recording.

For Bennett, one of the few performers to move easily between pop and jazz, such collaborations were part of his crusade to expose young audiences to what he called the Great American Songbook.

“No country has given the world such great music,” Bennett said in a 2015 interview with Downbeat Magazine. “Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Jerome Kern. Those songs will never die.”

Ironically, it was two unknowns, George Cory and Douglass Cross, who provided Bennett with his signature song when his career was in a lull. They gave Bennett’s musical director, pianist Ralph Sharon, some sheet music he forgot about until he was packing for a tour that included a stop in

San Francisco.

“Ralph saw some sheet music in his shirt drawer ... and on top of the pile was a song called ‘I Left My Heart In San Francisco.’ Ralph thought it would be good material for San Francisco,” Bennett said. “We were rehearsing and the bartender in the club in Little Rock, Arkansas, said, ‘If you record that song, I’m going to be the first to buy it.’”

Released in 1962 as a B-side, it became a grassroots phenomenon, staying on the charts for more than two years and earning Bennett his first two Grammys, including record of the year.

At times, Bennett struggled with recording companies for the right to sing the music he loved, but he refused to compromise by singing “cheap songs” that pandered to the latest musical fad. That approach served him well in a career that saw him become one of the only artists to have albums chart for seven decades.

was infectious. He was also one of the nicest human beings I’ve ever known.” — **Billy Joel**, in a statement.

“Tony Bennett’s life was legendary. And his contributions to the arts in America will endure. Jill and I have been fans of Tony’s music for a long time - not only because of his beautiful voice, but also the joy that he brought to everything he did.” — **President Joe Biden**, in a statement.

“Tony Bennett was an iconic songwriter and entertainer who charmed generations of fans. He was also a good man-Michelle and I will always be honored that he performed at my inauguration. We’re thinking of his wife Susan, his kids, and everyone who is missing him today.” — Former president **Barack Obama**, via Twitter.

“Tony Bennett was a consummate artist. All you have to do is listen to any one of his hundreds of recordings to recognize that. Very early on, his music quietly wove itself into the fabric of our lives. His voice felt as familiar and as close as the voices of our loved ones. I know that this was true for millions of people around the world. For Italian-Americans who were growing up in the middle of the twentieth century, that familiarity ran even deeper. At a certain point, we started to imagine that Tony would live forever. Of course he didn’t. Nobody does. But the music? That’s another story.” — **Martin Scorsese**, in a statement.



A self-portrait by actor Johnny Depp is displayed at Castle Fine Art gallery on Thursday, July 20, in London. Depp has painted the emotions of recent years into a self-portrait, titled ‘Five,’ and is offering the result for sale as a time-limited edition as of July 20. (AP)

Variety

LONDON: Three of **Kevin Spacey**’s accusers are liars, his lawyer told jurors Thursday at the actor’s sexual assault trial, and he suggested they not convict him for making a “clumsy pass” at a fourth man.

Spacey was an easy mark for men who hopped on a “bandwagon” and fabricated stories in hopes of a payout, attorney **Patrick Gibbs** said.

“A man who is promiscuous, not publicly out, who wants to be just a normal guy,” Gibbs said in describing his famous client. “It’s a life that makes you an easy target when the internet turns against you and you’re tried by social media.”

Spacey, 63, has pleaded not guilty to nine charges, including multiple counts of sexual and indecent assault and one count of causing a person to engage in activity without consent.

The jury of nine men and three women is due to begin deliberating on Monday in **Southwark** Crown Court.

The acts alleged between 2001 and 2013 range from unwanted touching. Spacey was artistic director at the Old Vic Theatre in London during most of that period.

Gibbs said the prosecution case was based on fictions and fantasies.

Contrary to the prosecution’s claim that Spacey exploited his celebrity status to take advantage of and silence his alleged victims, Gibbs suggested it was his client, seated near a jailer in the dock, who suffered from a power imbalance and was forced to disprove the lies against him.

Prosecutor **Christine Agnew** said in her final argument that it was no coincidence that three of the men, who didn’t know each other, had accused Spacey of aggressively grabbing them, which she called his “trademark” move.

But Gibbs said that the pattern that had emerged during the trial was of the defense disproving or casting doubt on the accusers.

Gibbs focused on the allegations by a man who said Spacey subjected him to unwanted touching for years until a day he was driving the star to **Elton John**’s gala ball in 2004 or 2005 when the actor grabbed him so forcefully that he nearly swerved off the road.

Photos showed Spacey only attended the party in 2001 and that was supported by surprise testimony from John and his husband, appearing in the London court by video from **Monaco**. (AP)

ROME: Prosecutors in **Turin** have reportedly opened an investigation after the lead singer of British band Placebo insulted Premier **Giorgia Meloni** during a July 11 concert, calling her a fascist and racist.

The LaPresse and ANSA news agencies said the investigation into alleged “vilification” stemmed from a report by

carabinieri police about the comments by **Brian Molko** during a performance at the Sonic Park Festival in **Stupinigi**, near Turin.

According to a cellphone video circulating on social media, Moko said in Italian: “Giorgia Meloni: piece of (expletive); fascist, racist (expletive).”

Emails and calls to Turin prosecutors seeking confirmation weren’t immediately returned. Facebook and Instagram messages left on Placebo’s official ac-



Spacey



John

counts went unanswered.

Members of Meloni’s far-right Brothers of **Italy** party, which has its roots in Italy’s neo-fascist movement, denounced the insults and demanded an apology.

“We cannot let an international event that attracts so many people (to Italy) be ruined by filthy words which, amidst a general silence, aim to attack the institutions of the republic,” LaPresse quoted Brothers of Italy lawmaker Augusta Montaruli as saying. (AP)

Climate

Heatwaves killed 100

Record heat numbers paint grim world story

NEW YORK, July 22, (AP): The summer of 2023 is behaving like a broken record about broken records.

Nearly every major climate-tracking organization proclaimed June the hottest June ever. Then July 4 became the globe's hottest day, albeit unofficially, according to the University of Maine's Climate Reanalyzer. It was quickly overtaken by July 5 and July 6. Next came the hottest week, a tad more official, stamped into the books by the World Meteorological Organization and the Japanese Meteorological Agency.

With a summer of extreme weather records dominating the news, meteorologists and scientists say records like these give a glimpse of the big picture: a warming planet caused by climate change. It's a picture that comes in the vibrant reds and purples representing heat on daily weather maps online, in newspapers and on television.

Beyond the maps and the numbers are real harms that kill. More than 100 people have died in heat waves in the United States and India so far this summer.

Records are crucial for people designing infrastructure and working in agriculture because they need to plan for the worst scenarios, said Russell Vose, climate analysis group director for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. He also chairs a committee on national records.

In the past 30 days, nearly 5,000 heat and rainfall records have been broken or tied in the US and more than 10,000 records set globally, according to NOAA. Texas cities and towns alone have set 369 daily high temperature records since June 1.

Since 2000, the US has set about twice as many records for heat as those for cold.

"Records go back to the late 19th century and we can see that there has been a decade-on-decade increase in temperatures," said Gavin Schmidt, director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, keeper of the agency's climate records. "What's happening now is certainly increasing the chances that 2023 will be the warmest year on record. My calculations suggest that there's, right now, a 50-50 chance."

Weather

The larger the geographic area and the longer stretch of time during which records are set, the more likely the conditions represent climate change rather than daily weather. So the hottest global June is "extremely unlikely" to happen without climate change, as opposed to one city's daily record, Texas state climatologist John Nielsen-Gammon said.

Still, some local specifics are striking: Death Valley has flirted this summer with the hottest temperature in modern history, though that 134 degree Fahrenheit (56.7 Celsius) record is in dispute.

Phoenix grabbed headlines among major US cities on Tuesday when it marked a 19th consecutive day of unrelenting mega heat: 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43.3 Celsius) or more. It kept going, reaching a 22nd straight day on Friday. The daytime heat was accompanied by a record stretch of nights that never fell below 90 Fahrenheit (32.2 Celsius).

"Everybody's drawn to extremes," Vose said. "It's like the Guinness Book of World Records. Human nature is just drawn to the extreme things out of curiosity."

But the numbers can be flawed in what they portray. The scientific community "doesn't really have the vocabulary to communicate what it feels like," said Stanford University climate scientist Chris Field, who co-chaired a groundbreaking United Nations report in 2012 warning of the dangers of extreme weather from climate change.

"I don't think it captures the human sense, but it really does underscore that we live in a different world," Field said of the records.

Think of the individual statistics as brush strokes in a painting of the world's climate, Cornell University climate scientist Natalie Mahowald said. Don't fixate on any specific number.

She and other climate scientists say long-term warming from burning coal, oil and natural gas is the chief cause of rising temperatures, along with occasional boosts from natural El Nino warmings across parts of the Pacific, like the planet is experiencing this year.

El Nino is a natural temporary warming of parts of the Pacific that changes weather patterns worldwide and adds an extra warm boost. An El Nino formed in June and scientists say this one looks strong. For the previous three years El Nino's cool flip side, La Nina, dampened a bit of the heat humans are causing.

A super El Nino spiked global temperatures in 1998, then was followed by less warming and even some flat temperatures for a few years until the next big El Nino, Mahowald said.

Weather won't worsen each year and that should not become a common expectation, but it will intensify over the long run, she said.

The University of Michigan's Richard Rood used to blog about climate records for Weather Underground, but in 2014 he got sick of continuously new extremes and stopped.

NOAA tracks weather observations from tens of thousands of stations throughout the US and its global calculations incorporate data from more than 100,000 stations, Vose said.

When those records come in, the agency checks their quality and calculates where the numbers fit historically. NOAA's National Center for Environmental Information in North Carolina is the arbiter of national records, while the local National Weather Service offices handle those for individual cities, Vose said.

Disagreements

A special international committee deals with world records and, at times, scientists disagree on the reliability of 100-year-old data. Those disagreements come into play over questions such as determining the hottest temperature recorded on Earth.

A landslide triggered by torrential rains in India's western Maharashtra state killed at least 10 people, with many others feared trapped under piles of debris, officials said Thursday. In this image captured by Associated Press photographer Rafiq Maqbool, a woman holds the hand of her relative as family members of people trapped under rubble wait after a landslide washed away houses.

Here's what's happening related to extreme weather and the climate right now:

■ In a refugee camp in Kenya, food shortages left kids hungry amid a drought even before Russia ended the grain deal. One farmer was forced to give most of his produce as tax to al-Qaida-linked extremists who have controlled parts of Somalia for years, and the little that remained wasn't enough to feed his family during Somalia's worst drought in decades, Evelynne Musambi reports.

■ Temperatures have peaked at or above 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43.3 degrees Celsius) the entire month of July in Phoenix and air conditioning has been a lifeline for many in the city. Isabella O'Malley and Beatrice Dupuy explain how the heat wave has some residents concerned about the energy bills they'll receive.

■ Travelers, considered a bellwether for the US insurance industry due to its size, said Thursday that catastrophe losses doubled in its most recent quarter as severe wind and hail storms in a number of regions led to rising coverage claims, Michelle Chapman reports.

■ Canada's worst-ever wildfire season has choked much of North America with dangerous smoke for months, coupling with deadly heat around the globe in a summer that's focusing the world's attention on the perils of climate change. See the photos by Noah Berger here.

■ A tornado damaged a Pfizer plant in North Carolina as scorching heat and floods soaked other parts of the US.



A digital billboard displays an unofficial temperature, Monday, July 17, in downtown Phoenix. In the past 30 days, nearly 5,000 heat and rainfall records have been broken or tied in the United States and more than 10,000 records set globally, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Since 2000, the US is setting about twice as many heat records as cold. (AP)

Health

Anonymous donations to WHO Foundation raise concerns

‘Gifts’ shaping global health policy?

NEW YORK, July 22, (AP): Nearly 40% of the money raised by the WHO Foundation in its first two years came from anonymous sources, worrying some that donors may be trying to influence the World Health Organization and its role in shaping global health policy with their gifts.

The foundation, launched in 2020 to help raise private sector funds for the WHO, said it received \$66 million in direct gifts through 2022, with \$26 million coming from donors who chose not to be publicly named. Anil Soni, WHO Foundation CEO, told The Associated Press the foundation's board, which includes a representative from the WHO, knows the donors' identities and that the foundation will not accept a gift if there is a conflict of interest.

"They want to be anonymous because they're otherwise solicited or even targeted because they're seen to be a source of wealth," Soni said in an interview. "And I respect that."

The foundation, which is based in Switzerland, is not required to disclose its donors.

Interest

Some global health practitioners worry anonymous donations make it harder to spot potential conflicts of interest. They say companies may donate to the foundation to influence the WHO's global health policies and reports that often have wide-ranging ramifications. For example, food and beverage companies took note last week when two branches of the WHO found that the sweetener aspartame - used in diet soda and countless foods - may be a "possible" cause of cancer.

"For the integrity of the WHO, I think it's really important that there's some greater transparency around this," said Sophie Harman, professor of international politics at Queen Mary University of London, of the anonymous donations, which include a single anonymous gift of \$20 million to the foundation's operating expenses.

Private and philanthropic funding have long supported other large global health organizations like Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, but Harman said the WHO has stood out as the publicly funded body that also sets standards across all areas of health.

"This is a big step change for the WHO that it's now doing this," Harman said.

The bulk of the WHO's funding comes from governments. But in 2020 with the onslaught of the pandemic and then-President Donald Trump's move to withdraw from the WHO, many hoped the WHO Foundation might generate new financing from wealthy individuals, the private sector and public fundraising campaigns.

SONI, the first leader of the foundation, has become an evangelist of sorts for bringing in new private sources of funding for the WHO. A veteran of major global health organizations like the Global Fund and the Clinton Health Access Initiative, he most recently worked eight years at the pharmaceutical company Viatris.

Transparency

Soni said he is committed to transparency. The foundation published a list of donors and their donations online, including the anonymous ones. Soni pointed to the foundation's gift acceptance and whistleblower policies as examples of how it guards against undue outside influence. It also bundles gifts to support specific work, such as the WHO's Ukraine and COVID-19 responses.

"What they've set out in their gift policy is a really good start," said Quinn Grundy, assistant professor with the Lawrence S. Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing at the University of

used in U.S. hospitals, according to the drugmaker.

Pfizer said Friday that a warehouse for raw materials, packaging supplies and finished medicines awaiting release had endured most of the damage to its 1.4 million square foot plant. An initial inspection by the company found no major damage to its medicine manufacturing areas, and all 3,200 local employees are safe and accounted for.

Pfizer Chairman and CEO Dr. Albert Bourla said staff are rushing products to nearby sites for storage and identifying sources to rapidly replace raw materials lost in the storm. The drug company says it is also exploring alternative manufacturing locations across its US network to fill gaps in production while the North Carolina site remains closed for repairs.

The FDA's initial analysis identified fewer than 10 drugs for which Pfizer's North Carolina plant is the sole source for the US market, Califf said.

Toronto, who has studied the interactions of industry with health systems. She also encouraged the foundation to decline gifts from donors who do not want to be publicly named.

The WHO already receives private support from major philanthropies, like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which directs much of its donations toward eradicating polio. The WHO Foundation does not aim to redirect that support, but rather motivate new donors.

Among the companies that have donated to the foundation are Meta, the parent company of Facebook, medical technology company Masimo Corp., luxury travel company DFS Group, and food giant Nestle. That donation elicited outcry from some global health professionals because of Nestle's history of marketing baby formula. WHO guidelines advocate for breastfeeding and say that formula should be available when needed, but not be promoted.

The foundation eventually reallocated Nestle's \$2.1 million donation to the vaccine-sharing initiative COVAX rather than to the WHO's COVID-19 response. Nestle did not comment on the donation but said it complies with national laws on marketing formula.

states, cities and farmers that rely on the Colorado River struggle to decide how to reduce their use. In August, the Interior Department will offer its annual analysis on the health of the river and announce if there will be additional cuts in the coming year.

In recent years the federal government has lowered some states' water allocations and offered billions of dollars to farmers, cities and others to cut back. But key water officials - including Trujillo - didn't see those efforts as enough to prevent the system from collapsing.

In his new role, Brain will help the Interior Department as it addresses drought resilience and funnels more money toward infrastructure projects.

Brain had served as deputy commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation since March 2022, overseeing media and congressional relations. He previously worked as a congressional staffer focusing on water and environmental issues and helping to develop funding bills related to water policy.

Brain has a law degree in urban planning, land use and environmental law from Saint Louis University and a bachelor's in political science and government from Boston College. (AP)



A neighborhood is flooded after heavy rains passed the area on Wednesday, July 19, in Mayfield, Ky. High-water rescue crews pulled people from flooded homes and vehicles Wednesday in Kentucky, where waves of thunderstorms prompted flash flood warnings and watches. (AP)



Bean



Brain

Discovery

Extreme heat in Phoenix: Temperatures have peaked at or above 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43.3 degrees Celsius) the entire month of July in Phoenix. Air conditioning, which made modern Phoenix even possible, is a lifeline.

When a cloudless sky combines with outdoor temperatures over 100 F, your house turns into an "air fryer" or "broiler," as the roof absorbs powerful heat and radiates it downward, said Jonathan Bean, co-director of the Institute for Energy Solutions at the University of Arizona. Bean knows this not only from his research, he also experienced it firsthand this weekend when his air conditioner broke.

"This level of heat that we are having in Phoenix right now is enormously dangerous, particularly for people who either don't have air conditioning or cannot afford to operate their air conditioner," said Evan Malen, a senior analyst for Georgia Institute of Technology's Urban Climate Lab.

Yet some are cutting back on AC, trying to bear the heat, afraid of the high electricity bills that will soon arrive.

Camille Rabany, 29, has developed her own system to keep herself and her 10-month-old Saint Bernard Ringley cool during the Arizona heat wave. Through trial and error, Rabany found that 83 F is a temperature she is willing to tolerate to keep her utility bill down.

By tracking the on-peak and off-peak schedule of her utility, Arizona Public Service, with the help of her NEST smart thermostat, Rabany keeps her home that hot from 4 to 7 p.m., the most expensive hours. She keeps fans running and has a cooling bed for Ringley, and they both try to get by until the utility's official peak hours pass.

"Those are the hours that I have it at the hottest I'm willing to have it because I have a dog," she said. Last month, Rabany said her utility bill was around \$150.

Emily Schmidt's home cooling strategy in Tempe, Ariz. also centers around her dog. Air conditioning is "constantly a topic of conversation," with her partner, too, she said.

"Sometimes I wish I could have it cooler, but we have to balance saving money and making sure the house isn't too hot for our pets."

With the unrelenting heat of the recent weeks, "I'm honestly afraid what the electric bill will be, which makes it really hard to budget with rent and other utilities," (AP)

Feds choose new deputy: The US Interior Department has tapped an official with the federal government's water

management bureau to serve as a deputy assistant secretary for water and science.

The Department announced the appointment of Michael Brain. He replaces

Tanya Trujillo, who recently resigned after playing a key role in negotiations over the shrinking Colorado River.

The leadership change comes as the



Debris is scattered around the Pfizer facility on Wednesday, July 19, in Rocky Mount, N.C., after damage from severe weather. On Friday, July 21, The Associated Press reported on stories circulating online incorrectly claiming the warehouse in damaged by a tornado was stocked with the company's COVID-19 vaccine. (AP)

Norris qualifies third behind Verstappen

Hamilton ends Max string of pole positions in Hungarian GP qualifying

BUDAPEST, July 22, (AP): Lewis Hamilton took his first pole position since 2021 at the Hungarian Grand Prix and ended Formula One champion Max Verstappen's bid for a sixth straight pole on Saturday.

Hamilton pumped his left fist several times after placing just .003 seconds

MOTOR RACING

ahead of Verstappen on his last lap to secure a record-extending 104th pole but first since Saudi Arabia in December 2021.

"Get in there, let's go boys!" So good!" Hamilton shouted on team radio before letting out a high-pitch whoop.

"It's been a crazy year and a half ... I didn't think today we'd be fighting for pole," Hamilton said. "I just need to try and see if I can sleep tonight."

It might not be easy, given the rush of joy he felt.

"I just had a grin on my face, what an uplifting feeling for the whole team," the seven-time F1 champion said. "When I went into the last run I gave it absolutely everything."

Wins and poles used to be as common for Hamilton as they are becoming for Verstappen, but Hamilton feels Mercedes is finally giving him a better shot at a first victory since his record 103rd race win, also in Saudi Arabia two years ago.

"I always have that belief. I guess it was just a question of how long that would be," the 38-year-old British driver said. "Last year I had no confidence in the car. Now there's no fear that it's going to throw you into the wall."

McLaren driver Lando Norris qualified third behind Verstappen at the Hungaroring, the track where Hamilton won his first race for Mercedes in 2013.



British Formula One driver Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes-AMG Petronas steers his car during the qualifying ahead of Sunday's Formula One Hungarian Grand Prix auto race, at the Hungaroring racetrack in Mogyorod, near Budapest, Hungary. (AP)

Norris is well placed to push for a second straight podium after finishing second at the British GP.

"I feel excited. Race pace was as strong as Silverstone," Norris said. "With cars up there tomorrow, hope-

fully we can use them."

His teammate Oscar Piastri, who finished fourth at Silverstone, maintained his form when he qualified fourth ahead of Alfa Romeo's Zhou Guanyu and Ferrari's Charles Leclerc.

Valtteri Bottas qualified seventh for Alfa Romeo, ahead of Fernando Alonso (Aston Martin), Sergio Perez (Red Bull) and Nico Hulkenberg (Haas).

Perez finally ended a terrible run.

Since taking the Miami GP pole in May, the Mexican driver has failed to qualify in the top 10 - qualifying 16th, 11th, 12th, 15th and 15th. His struggles continued when he crashed just three minutes into the first practice session on Friday.

Verstappen, meanwhile, complained he felt like he was "driving on ice" in qualifying due to a lack of balance.

"We should be ahead with the car we have, but so far this weekend we haven't been on it," he said.

But qualifying second will hardly faze the Dutchman, considering he won from 10th place on the grid last year.

He is cruising toward a third straight F1 title. He has won the past six races and eight in a campaign where he already leads Perez by 99 points, so Hamilton knows the task facing him.

"We'll bring our A game as a team," he said. "It's going to be difficult to fight these guys tomorrow."

Hamilton's teammate, George Russell, took the pole here last year but was among the five drivers eliminated from the first part of qualifying after getting stuck in traffic, prompting team principal Toto Wolff to bang his fist on the table and Russell to let fly with an expletive. Ferrari's Carlos Sainz Jr. starts a lowly 11th while Daniel Ricciardo qualified 13th on his unexpected return to F1 with the AlphaTauri team. American Logan Sargeant was last for Williams.

'This group is focused on winning'

For Commanders & their fans, new owner Josh Harris represents hope

LANDOVER, Md., July 22, (AP): Josh Harris kept his remarks brief when he took the stage at a pep rally at FedEx Field. He didn't have to say much.

Eventually, the crowd of Washington Commanders fans began chanting: "Thank you Josh! Thank you Josh!"

They used to have parades around here for Super Bowl titles, but for now this cathartic scene Friday will suffice. After a quarter-century of ineptitude on the field and embarrassment off it under owner Dan Snyder, Harris and his group offer Washington a chance at a fresh start. Few football towns have ever needed one more.

NFL owners approved the sale of the Commanders on Thursday to a group led by Harris, who grew up in the Washington area as a fan of the team. Back then, home games were a famously tough ticket at RFK Stadium, but empty seats became common at FedEx Field as the franchise became one of the most dysfunctional in sports.

Washington hasn't won a playoff game since the 2005 season, when Hall of Famer Joe Gibbs was in his second stint as the team's coach. If Gibbs was hyperbolically treated as a savior when he returned, Harris is being greeted as a liberator. Some fans wore shirts Friday that said: "I Survived The Snyder Era."



Josh Harris, the leader of a group buying the Washington Commanders, speaks at an introductory NFL football news conference at FedEx Field in Landover, Md. (AP)

For their part, Snyder and his wife, Tanaya, released a statement Friday congratulating Harris and his group and expressing gratitude toward the fans.

Harris, who also co-owns the NBA's Philadelphia 76ers and the NHL's New Jersey Devils, has plenty of work to do with the Commanders. Will he change the team's name again? And what direction will he take the team's effort to secure a new stadium?

He didn't offer many specifics Friday. Before speaking to the crowd outside, he and his ownership group - which includes Magic Johnson - were introduced at an indoor event. Harris briefly took questions from reporters, saying his immediate priority is improving the fan experience at the team's current venue.

"Right now, that's going to be things like ingress and egress and food," he said.

FOOTBALL

FedEx Field, which sits right next to the Capital Beltway, has been plagued by traffic issues, and there was even a railing collapse last year after a game against Philadelphia in which fans fell onto the field.

"We're going to throw a party every other Sunday, and when you have guests in your house, you treat them well," Harris said. "You don't have couches that are broken, you don't have TVs that aren't working. So we've got to get after all that, and that's what we're focused on right now."

"As far as the stadium experience, long run, we would love to have a stadium where the opposing players fear to come, and our fans love to come, and our players love to come and feel welcome. That's what I experienced at RFK."

There were plenty of familiar faces at the stadium, including current standouts like receiver Terry McLaurin and defensive lineman Jonathan Allen.

Stars of the past like Darrell Green and Doug Williams - and Gibbs, who coached them - were also seated up front at the news conference.

"I think this group is focused on winning - putting together an organization and then a team that everybody can get behind," Gibbs said.

Eflin pitches 7 crisp innings as Bay Rays shut out Orioles



Minnesota Twins left fielder Matt Wallner fields a ball hit by Chicago White Sox's Elvis Andrus in the seventh inning of a baseball game in Minneapolis. (AP)

Dodgers stop Rangers

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla., July 22, (AP): Zach Eflin pitched seven strong innings to become the AL's third 11-game winner, and the Tampa Bay Rays beat the Baltimore Orioles 3-0 on Friday night in a matchup of the top teams in the American League.

Baltimore, which won 4-3 in 10 innings on Thursday night in the opener of the four-game set, leads the AL East with a .608 winning percentage compared to Tampa Bay's .604.

Eflin (11-5) allowed two hits, struck out eight and walked one, improving to 10-1 in 11 starts at home.

After Colin Poche struck out the side in the eighth, Pete Fairbanks finished the two-hitter for his 11th save in 12 chances.

Dodgers 11, Rangers 5

In Arlington, Freddie Freeman hit a two-run double and a solo homer before scoring the go-ahead run as the Dodgers snapped the Rangers' six-game winning streak.

J.D. Martinez hit two RBI singles and drew a bases-loaded walk for the

offers..

Braves 6, Brewers 4

In Milwaukee, Atlanta star Austin Riley homered for the fifth time in his last four games, and Orlando Arcia also went deep.

Riley hit a two-run homer in the third inning, and then singled and scored in the fifth to help the Braves win the matchup of division leaders. Riley is 8 for 17 with 13 RBIs over his last four games.

Arcia connected for a two-run homer in Atlanta's three-run second, helping the Braves erase an early 2-0 deficit.

Guardians 6, Phillies 5

In Cleveland, Bryce Harper flashed some glove with a stunning catch in his first career start at first base, but Cleveland ended Philadelphia's inter-league winning streak at 12 games.

José Ramírez had four hits and David Fry drove in two runs for the Guardians. Trevor Stephan (5-4) got the win, and Emmanuel Clase worked a 1-2-3 ninth for his 26th save in 33 tries.

J.T. Realmuto hit a two-run homer and Bryson Stott had a solo shot for Philadelphia, which squandered some early scoring chances and lost for just the fourth time in its last 19 road games. Ranger Suárez (2-5) was charged with the loss.

Padres 5, Tigers 4

In Detroit, Juan Soto hit two long home runs, powering San Diego to the win.

Soto connected for a 447-foot solo drive in the first inning. He added a two-run shot in the third that traveled an estimated 463 feet. He has 19 homers on the season.

Seth Lugo (4-4) pitched six innings of two-run ball for the Padres. Josh Hader worked the ninth for his 24th

save.

Riley Greene and Zach McKinstry homered for Detroit. Reese Olson (1-4) took the loss, allowing five runs and seven hits in five innings.

Reds 9, Diamondbacks 6

In Cincinnati, rookie Matt McLain hit his first career grand slam, and Cincinnati extended its win streak to three games.

Spencer Steer had two hits and three RBIs for the Reds. Alex Young (4-0) got one out for the win, and Alexis Díaz worked the ninth for his 28th save.

Cincinnati (53-46) pulled within 1 1/2 games of NL Central-leading Milwaukee.

Ketel Marte homered twice and drove in four runs for Arizona (54-44). Alek Thomas also went deep.

Twins 9, White Sox 4

In Minneapolis, Minnesota's Byron Buxton halted an 0-for-26 skid by homering in his first two at-bats, and Alex Kirilloff and Ryan Jeffers also took Lance Lynn deep.

In Cincinnati, Minnesota's Byron Buxton halted an 0-for-26 skid by homering in his first two at-bats, and Alex Kirilloff and Ryan Jeffers also took Lance Lynn deep.

Buxton hit a first-pitch fastball from Lynn into the bullpen in left-center to cap a five-run first inning that Kirilloff sparked with a two-run shot. Buxton led off the fourth with a drive into the left-field bleachers for his 17th homer of the season.

Twins starter Joe Ryan (9-6) gave up a home run by Andrew Benintendi on his first pitch and outlasted a two-run shot by Yasmani Grandal in the sixth to finish that inning and notch his second win in his last 10 turns.

Yankees 5, Royals 4

In New York, Billy McKinney hit a three-run homer and made two key catches in center field as the Yankees got a much-needed win.

Franchy Cordero homered for the second straight game and Gleyber

Torres also went deep for the Yankees, who stopped a four-game slide and won for only the third time in 12 games since July 4. Torres extended his hitting streak to 11 games.

New York right-hander Clarke Schmidt (6-6) was charged with three runs and five hits in 5 2/3 innings. Clay Holmes worked the ninth for his 12th save.

Cubs 4, Cardinals 3

In Chicago, Cody Bellinger hit a two-run homer, and the Cubs stopped the Cardinals' six-game win streak.

Bellinger capped Chicago's four-run third inning with a 400-foot drive to right against Jack Flaherty. Bellinger, a possible trade target ahead of the Aug. 1 deadline, is 10 for 20 in his last five games.

All-Star left-hander Justin Steele (10-3) struck out a season-high nine in 6 1/3 innings for Chicago. Adbert Alzolay worked the ninth for his eighth save.

Rockies 6, Marlins 1

In Miami, C.J. Cron, Jurickson Profar and Elias Díaz homered for Colorado, and Peter Lambert pitched five shutout innings.

Miami dropped its seventh straight game since the All-Star break.

Lambert (2-1) surrendered three hits in his return from a three-week stint in the minors aimed at converting him into a starter after struggling as a reliever.

Miami starter Braxton Garrett (5-3) gave up six runs over three innings. Luis Arraez went 0 for 3 with a walk for the Marlins, dropping his major league-leading average to .373.

Nationals 5, Giants 3

In Washington, CJ Abrams and Lane Thomas homered for Washington, and rookie Jake Irvin struck out a career-high nine in 6 2/3 innings.

J.D. Davis and Joc Pederson homered for the Giants, who have dropped three in a row since a seven-game winning streak that spanned the All-Star break.

Abrams homered off Alex Wood (4-4) with two outs in the second for his ninth of the season. He also doubled to lead off the fifth, chasing Wood. Irvin (3-5) allowed three runs and five hits. Kyle Finney worked a 1-2-3 ninth for his 13th save.

Mariners 3, Blue Jays 2

In Seattle, Teoscar Hernández lined a two-out RBI single in the bottom of the ninth to score Jose Caballero and Seattle rallied to beat Toronto.

Hernández jumped on the first pitch from Jordan Romano (4-5) and hit a line drive over the head of George Springer in right field and off the wall, allowing Caballero to jog home with the winning run.

MLB Results/Standings

WASHINGTON, July 22, (AP): Results and standings from the MLB games on Friday.											
Tampa Bay	3	Baltimore	0	Houston	6	Oakland	4				
San Diego	5	Detroit	4	Seattle	3	Toronto	2				
NY Yankees	5	Kansas City	4	Chicago Cubs	4	St. Louis	3				
Cleveland	6	Philadelphia	5	Colorado	6	Miami	1				
Minnesota	9	Chicago W. Sox	4	Washington	5	San Francisco	3				
LA Dodgers	11	Texas	5	Cincinnati	9	Arizona	6				
LA Angels	8	Pittsburgh	5	Atlanta	6	Milwaukee	4				
American League				National League							
East Division				East Division							
W	L	Pct	GB	W	L	Pct	GB				
Baltimore	59	38	.608	—	Atlanta	63	33	.656	—		
Tampa Bay	61	40	.604	—	Philadelphia	52	45	.536	11-1/2		
Toronto	54	44	.551	5-1/2	Miami	53	46	.535	11-1/2		
Boston	51	46	.526	8	New York	45	51	.469	18		
New York	51	47	.520	8-1/2	Washington	39	58	.402	24-1/2		
Central Division				Central Division							
W	L	Pct	GB	W	L	Pct	GB				
Minnesota	51	48	.515	—	Milwaukee	54	44	.551	—		
Cleveland	48	49	.495	2	Cincinnati	53	46	.535	1-1/2		
Detroit	44	53	.454	6	Chicago	46	51	.474	7-1/2		
Chicago	41	58	.414	10	St. Louis	44	54	.449	10		
Kansas City	28	71	.283	23	Pittsburgh	42	55	.433	11-1/2		
West Division				West Division							
W	L	Pct	GB	W	L	Pct	GB				
Texas	58	40	.592	—	Los Angeles	56	40	.583	—		
Houston	55	43	.561	3	Arizona	54	44	.551	3		
Los Angeles	50	48	.510	8	San Francisco	54	44	.551	3		
Seattle	49	48	.505	8-1/2	San Diego	47	51	.480	10		
Oakland	27	73	.270	32	Colorado	38	59	.392	18-1/2		

Kraken lock up Dunn with 4-year contract

SEATTLE, July 22, (AP): The Seattle Kraken re-signed top defenseman Vince Dunn to a four-year, \$29.4 million contract Friday, locking up one of their core pieces coming off the best season of his career.

Dunn, 26, had a career-high 14 goals and 64 points in the regular season playing in the top defensive pairing for the Kraken. Teamed with veteran Adam Larsson, Dunn enjoyed the breakout season

many expected when he was taken by Seattle during the expansion draft before its inaugural season.

Dunn was a restricted free agent and the long-term contract avoided an arbitration hearing. The contract will run through the 2026-27 season and his \$7.35 million annual average is the largest financial commitment made to date by the Kraken on a new contract. Goalie Philipp Grubauer signed a six-year, \$35.4 million deal that averages \$5.9 million per season before Seattle's inaugural season in 2021-22.

ICE HOCKEY

Dunn appeared in 81 games in the regular season, sitting out only once to rest before the playoffs. In the postseason, Dunn's production dipped as he managed only one goal and six assist in Seattle's 14 playoff games. But he played more than 23

minutes per game in the post-season and was often called upon to try and slow down the top forward lines of Colorado and Dallas.

Dunn spent the first four seasons of his career in St. Louis and won a Stanley Cup with the Blues in 2019 at age 22. But he was a perfect target for Seattle after being exposed in the expansion draft as a foundational piece the Kraken could build around for the future.

Dunn is the third player from Seattle's expansion draft group to sign a multi-year deal with the franchise. Forward Jared McCann, who had a career-high 40 goals and 70 points this past season, signed a five-year, \$25 million extension in March 2022 that will keep him under contract with Seattle through the 2026-27 season.

Seattle also signed defenseman Will Borgen to a two-year deal this offseason. Borgen was a restricted free agent as well.

BASEBALL

Dodgers, who played at Globe Life Field for the first time since winning the 2020 World Series in the neutral-site postseason during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Angels 8, Pirates 5

In Anaheim, Shohei Ohtani allowed four homers for the first time in his major league career while pitching six-hit ball into the seventh inning and earning the mound victory as Los Angeles beat Pittsburgh.

Pirates rookie Henry Davis became the first major league player to homer twice off Ohtani. The No. 1 overall pick in the 2021 draft had three total hits off Ohtani, while Ji Man Choi and Jack Suwinski also homered in Pittsburgh's power spree from the fourth to the sixth innings.

Astros 6, Athletics 4

In Oakland, Kyle Tucker hit three home runs in a game for the first time in his career and drove in four runs, Alex Bregman also went deep and Houston earned its ninth straight win over Oakland dating to last season.

It was the fifth multi-homer game of Tucker's career, including play-



Seattle Mariners' Teoscar Hernandez, (second from left), celebrates hitting a walk-off single for a 3-2 win over the Toronto Blue Jays as teammate Julio Rodriguez, (left), looks on after a baseball game in Seattle. (AP)



Spain's Olga Carmona (left), and Costa Rica's Melissa Herrera compete for the ball during the Women's World Cup Group C soccer match between Spain and Costa Rica in Wellington, New Zealand. (AP)

Canada held to 0-0 draw by Nigeria

Spain light up gloomy Wellington night

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, July 22, (AP): With three goals in four minutes in the middle of a lopsided first half, Spain shattered Costa Rica's resistance, created the foundation of a resounding 3-0 win and sent a warning to rivals at the Women's World Cup.

Speculation that Spain was a team weakened by injuries was misleading. They had more than 80% of possession by halftime, 12 corners, 15 shots on goal and had put to rest any concerns over injured players left behind. That the second half didn't match the first was of little concern.

SOCCKER

Spain began its campaign with a performance that demanded attention and brightened a bitter winter's night in Wellington.

Two-time Ballon d'Or-winner Alexis Putellas started on the bench, wasn't needed until the 77th minute, and went on to a rousing ovation after her long injury battle.

Though they attacked relentlessly,

Spain needed 22 minutes until it opened the scoring - and that came from an own goal. Aitana Bonmati cut the ball back across goal from the left and Valeria del Campo, attempting to clear, sliced the ball into her own net.

Bonmati scored herself a minute later, striking the ball hard and low from the edge of the box. Two minutes later, Esther Gonzalez was on hand to add the third. It mattered little when Jennifer Hermoso missed from the penalty spot in the 32nd, her shot saved by Daniela Solera.

On a night when a cruel southerly wind and stinging rain might have dimmed the spirit and frustrated adventure, Spain was fearless and resilient.

Bonmati was constantly at the hub of things as she had been in Putellas' absence and for Barcelona when she was MVP in this year's Champions league. Barcelona provided the backbone of this Spanish team and its inspiration, its engine.

Though the second half didn't match the first, Spain still stamped on the tournament a performance to be savored. When the world champion

U.S. team takes the field for the first time on Saturday in Group E, it will be in the shadow of the Spain's performance and that might be the standard by which it is measured.

While it didn't add to its tally in the second half, Spain finished with 45 shots on goal, in itself a testament to its effort and intention.

Costa Rica lifted itself in the second half and competed with more vigor, defended with more rigidity. Sheika Scott made an appearance from the bench at 16, one of the youngest players in the tournament.

And Solera marked her 26th birthday with her outstanding penalty save.

With a diving one-handed save to her left, 22-year-old goalkeeper Chiamaka Nnadozie denied international soccer's leading scorer Christine Sinclair and played a pivotal role in Nigeria holding Olympic champion Canada to a 0-0 draw at the Women's World Cup.

Nnadozie parried away Sinclair's shot from the spot in the 50th minute Friday after the Canadian veteran had earned the penalty after being clipped by Nigerian forward Francisca Ordega.

Sinclair's 190 international goals is an all-time record - for both women's and men's soccer - and she's aiming to become the first player to score in six World Cups. It didn't happen in Canada's opening Group B game.

In the Super Falcons' last major international tournament, the 2022 Women's Africa Cup of Nations, Nigeria lost to Morocco in a semifinal penalty shootout, 5-4, with Nnadozie between the goalposts.

At age 18, in the 2019 Women's World Cup, Nnadozie became the youngest goalkeeper to keep a clean sheet in Women's World Cup history, with a 2-0 group stage victory over South Korea.

After her draw-preserving save on the Canadian captain in Melbourne, Nnadozie pointed to her head with gloved hands. After the match, she said the gesture was to remind herself: "Come on, girl, come on. This is another game. We still got some minutes to play. Don't relax."

A penalty was the decisive factor in the opening Group B match on Thursday night, when co-host Australia edged Ireland 1-0.

'Watch our matches'

SA have resolved WC pay 'dispute'

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, July 22, (AP): South African players are committed to playing in the Women's World Cup following disputes around player and support staff pay, and the team captain on Saturday assured fans back home they are fully focused on their upcoming tournament matches.

Team captain Refiloe Jane confirmed that all disputes with the South African federation had been settled before the tournament's start, including the guarantee of \$30,000 to each player that had previously been promised by FIFA.

"All the contractual disputes that we had were resolved," Jane said at a news conference ahead of Sunday's opener against Sweden. "We came into New Zealand having sorted all our problems. And when we left South Africa, we assured the nation that everything has been in order. So coming into this tournament our focus has been just focusing on football."



Jane

Earlier this month, the majority of the national team did not play a warm-up match against Botswana in protest of FIFA's group payment of \$30,000 was not included in their contracts, in addition to concerns around the condition of the stadium in which they were scheduled to play. The South African Football Association cobbled together a team of local club players, the roster for which included a 13-year-old player, and lost 5-0.

SOCCKER

The pay dispute ended when Patrice Motsepe, the president of the African Football Confederation and the first Black billionaire in Africa on the Forbes list, agreed to contribute \$320,000 to Banyana to be equally distributed to the World Cup players.

In that same news conference announcing the donation from the Motsepe Foundation, the South African Football Players Union noted it also negotiated a deal that would financially benefit backroom and technical staff.

In the last week, after Banyana Banyana's arrival in New Zealand, the South African Football Association released statements contradicting the players' union previous statement regarding support staff salaries.

"We have committed to every single cent that was raised for the players including the FIFA prize monies that were put on the table," said SAFA on July 16, 11 days after the mention of support staff. "As far as the staff is concerned, we committed to their assignment contracts to pay their daily fees as per the contract signed and daily allowances, over and above the fees."

The decision to move past the disputes was of great importance to the players, Jane said.

"It gives us time to focus on what really matters, which is to play football for our nation and to represent the country," she said.

Solving the contract has also been important for garnering from the team's fans.

"It was a good feeling to know that we have that support, to know that everyone has been behind us," she said. "We have that support from back at home."

Brazil's players urged their fans back in South America to stay home from work and watch them begin their Women's World Cup campaign against Panama.

England edge Haiti in tough opener for Euro champs at Women's WCup



Switzerland's Ana Maria Crnogorcevic, (left), heads the ball next to Philippines' Hali Long during the second half of the Women's World Cup Group A soccer match between the Philippines and Switzerland in Dunedin, New Zealand. (AP)

Switzerland blank Philippines

BRISBANE, Australia, July 22, (AP): England edged Haiti 1-0 on a retaken penalty from Georgia Stanway in a difficult Women's World Cup opener Saturday for the European champions against a team on debut at the tournament.

England dominated possession in the first half but had to wait until the 29th minute for Stanway to convert from the spot. She was awarded a second shot on a VAR review, for encroachment, after her first attempt was well saved by Kerly Theus diving full stretch to her right.

The Group D game between the No. 4 and the 53rd-ranked teams was tense from start to finish with Haiti forward Melchie Dumornay regularly troubling the England defense.

"I can say if we do that against England we can do anything against anyone," Dumornay said.

The athletic Theus made a succession of saves to thwart England's chances of increasing its margin and then Haiti went within inches of a stunning late equalizer.

England goalkeeper Mary Earps made a crucial reflex save in the 81st in a close-range, one-on-one with substitute forward Roseline Elouisaint, her second big stop of the match.

Ultimately, it was an inexplicable lapse from Haiti's Batcheba Louis, who reached up as she jumped in the area and was penalized for handball,

that made the difference.

It was an impressive debut in front of a 44,369 crowd from Haiti, one of the last three teams to qualify for the biggest Women's World Cup ever staged.

Despite being in control in the first half, England was far from convincing against a Haiti lineup that got numbers back in defense.

Dumornay was threatening on the counter and made inroads after having some early medical treatment. After a long upfield pass in the 35th, she didn't quite connect with a cross from the right as she attempted a bicycle kick from inside the area.

And just after halftime, Dumornay lashed a powerful right-foot shot that forced Earps into a save.

The Lionesses beat Germany in the final at the Euros last year for

their first major crown, heightening hopes in England of a world title to go with it. But ACL injuries to Beth Mead, the Player of the Tournament at Euro 2022, and Leah Williamson forced head coach Sarina Wiegman into changes.

Millie Bright took over as captain but also spent months recovering from a serious knee injury before being cleared to play a full part this week.

England hasn't scored a goal in open play since the win over Brazil in the Finalissima in April, and would have been expecting a more polished display.

Stanway said the most important thing was the three points.

"It's so important when you get going in the tournament. It's been a long buildup to today and I think we're kind of happy to just

get over the line," she said. "They caused us problems, they were threatening on the counter attack, they were fast and they were physical. And, yeah, they challenged us in areas that we probably didn't really expect."

Alessia Russo started up front for England and created opportunities but wasn't able to convert them. Approaching the hour, she forced two saves from Theus within a minute, while Haiti was down to 10 players with inspirational skipper Nérilia Mondésir getting treatment on a left ankle injury.

Russo's header in the 64th was tipped over the crossbar by Theus, the seventh save from the Haiti goalkeeper. Bright also fired over the crossbar minutes later.

The addition of Lauren James and Rachel Daly off the bench added energy and edge to the England attack over the last half hour but it didn't result in more goals. England had 19 shots on goal, Haiti had six.

SOCCKER

Both teams are back in action Friday, with England moving to Sydney and likely to make lineup changes to face Denmark, and Haiti meeting China in Adelaide.

The Haiti team, drawing on players based mainly in France and the U.S., aims to bring some positive news to a country in turmoil.

The team has limited sponsors, its training center is closed because of gang violence and some of its biggest fans can't afford a TV to watch the World Cup.

Ramona Bachmann drilled her penalty kick into the left side of the net moments before halftime to set up Switzerland's 2-0 win over Philippines on Friday in the Women's World Cup opener for both teams.

Switzerland's Seraina Piubel added a second-half goal, scoring on the rebound from a missed shot by Coumba Sow that ricocheted off Philippines goalkeeper Olivia McDaniel.

The Group A encounter was the first game inside Dunedin's Forsyth Barr Stadium, the tournament's only indoor venue. The crowd's cheers echoed around the walls of the roughly half-full stadium, with an attendance of 13,711 in a venue that can fit over 30,000.

Philippines forward Katrina Guillou appeared to score a goal in the 15th minute, but it was waived off by an offside call.

Switzerland dominated offensively, outshooting the Philippines 17-3, but the Filipinas' defense hung on. McDaniel held her own, making several key first-half saves -- only allowing Bachmann's late penalty.

Officials made the key penalty call against the Philippines in the waning moments of the first half, drawing a chorus of boos from Philippines fans. Switzerland's Sow slid for the ball in the Philippines' penalty area and, as she went down, she was kicked by Jessica Cowart.

McDaniel went the wrong way on Bachmann's penalty.

"Actually I was really calm, to be honest," Bachman said. "I've been training on it a lot. I feel quite confident in them."



England's Alessia Russo is challenged by Haiti's Sherly Jeudy during the Women's World Cup Group D soccer match between England and Haiti in Brisbane, Australia. (AP)



Japan's Riko Ueki (right), is fouled by Zambia's Catherine Musonda during the Women's World Cup Group C soccer match between Zambia and Japan in Hamilton, New Zealand. (AP)

Sports

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US, Japan cruise to opening WCup wins

Vangsgaard stars as last-gasp Denmark pip China

AUCKLAND, New Zealand, July 22, (AP): Fresh-faced newcomer Sophia Smith teamed with captain Lindsey Horan to give the United States a balanced performance as the Americans breezed to another opening victory at the Women's World Cup.

Smith scored twice and the two-time defending champions beat tournament first-timers Vietnam 3-0 Saturday for the Americans' 13th straight victory in a World Cup match. Smith, who turns 23 next month and is playing in her first tournament, is the second-youngest U.S. women's player to score multiple goals in a World Cup game.

Horan, the team's co-captain with Alex Morgan, added a goal for the favored Americans, who have won four World Cups overall and are vying for an unprecedented three-peat in this year's tournament.

Vietnam drew comparisons to Thailand, the team the Americans routed 13-0 in in their 2019 World Cup opening game. But Vietnam was surprisingly resilient, kept the game closer than expected, and goalkeeper Tran Thi Kim Thanh stopped Morgan's first-half penalty attempt.

SOCCER

Morgan was knocked to the field clutching her calf after trying for the rebound off her missed penalty, but she quickly returned. It was just her second penalty miss for the United States.

Smith, one of 14 Americans playing in their first World Cup, showed why she was named both U.S. Soccer's Player of the Year and the National Women's Soccer League MVP last year with her two first-half goals.

She scored when Morgan directed a pass from Horan to her in the 14th minute. Smith and Horan celebrated with a choreographed handshake after the goal.

Smith scored again in first-half stoppage time to make it 2-0 going into the break. The United States was at first flagged as offside before a video review confirmed the goal.

The U.S. team was infused with young talent including Smith and Trinity Rodman after settling for a disappointing bronze medal at the Tokyo Olympics.

Among the veterans, 38-year-old Megan Rapinoe made her 200th international appearance against Vietnam.

Rapinoe, who scored in the World Cup final in France and was named that tournament's best player, did not start. She announced before the team left for New Zealand that this would be her last World Cup and she would retire from her professional team at the end of the season.

Rapinoe and midfielder Rose Lavelle, who were both limited by injuries in the run-up to the tournament, both came in as substitutes in the 63rd minute. Rapinoe sported bright blue hair.

The youngest player on the team, 18-year-old Alyssa Thompson, was also a second-half sub.

Should the United States top the group, the team will head to Sydney for the round of 16.

Hinata Miyazawa scored a pair of goals, while Mina Tanaka and Jun Endo each added a goal and an assist, as Japan shut out Zambia 5-0 to open Women's World Cup play for both sides.

Miyazawa found the back of the net with one-time finishes on either side of halftime to secure an easy win over the Copper Queens in what was their World Cup debut.

Tanaka, denied goals twice on offside calls, scored in similar fashion in the 55th minute, assisted by Endo.

Endo then scored in the 71st minute, finding herself alone on the left side of goalkeeper Catherine Musonda's goal and slotting home a left-footed strike.

Not only did Tanaka see two goals called back by VAR for offside, the Nadeshiko were awarded an early second-half penalty only to see it rescinded for yet another offside call.

The Group C clash was the first time a senior World Cup match was hosted at Hamilton's Waikato Stadium. Saturday's attendance of 16,111 nearly filled the stadium that holds just over 18,000.

Zambia struggled to find its footing in its World Cup debut. Star striker Barbra Banda found herself isolated at the top of the pitch and marked by three Japanese defenders for much of the night.

Deep into second-half injury time, the Copper Queens' fortunes went from bad to worse as goalkeeper



(From left), United States' Julie Ertz, United States' Alex Morgan and Vietnam's goalkeeper Thi Kim Thanh Tran collide during the Women's World Cup Group E soccer match between the United States and Vietnam in Auckland, New Zealand. (AP)



Denmark's Amalie Vangsgaard celebrates with Pernille Harder (right), and Josefine Hasbo (foreground), after scoring the opening goal during the Women's World Cup Group D soccer match between Denmark and China at Perth Rectangular Stadium, in Perth, Australia. (AP)

Catherine Musonda, who started the match in place of an injured Hazel Nali, was sent off with a second yellow card for a foul in the box.

Initially, Riko Ueki's penalty hit the underside of the crossbar, but VAR ruled the penalty be retaken for goalkeeper encroachment. Ueki sent her second chance into the lower right corner of the net.

Substitute Amalie Vangsgaard scored in the 90th minute as Denmark beat China 1-0.

With time running out in a game of few chances, she rose to head home Pernille Harder's late corner.

Vangsgaard had only come on in the 85th and scored the first headed goal of the tournament to spark joyous celebrations from Denmark's players.

The win saw the Danes go level with European champions England at the top of Group D after its 1-0 win against Haiti earlier in the day.

Josefine Hasbo had looked like blowing Denmark's chance of victory after missing a golden opportunity to score early in the second half. With an open goal to aim at, she headed over the bar from inside the area.

Vangsgaard was more clinical when her chance came, with a looping effort from deep in the box that bounced before crossing the line.

It was a cruel way for China to lose after stifling the Danes with its disciplined defense. Denmark failed to register a single shot on target in the first half, while China managed just one when Zhang Linyan forced a save from the edge of the box.

China substitute Wang Shuang was denied by Lene Christensen at the start of the second half.

See Also Page 15

Inter Miami hold off Cruz Azul

Messi scores sensational game-winning goal in debut

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla., July 22, (AP): Some people paid hundreds of dollars to be able to say they were in the stadium for Lionel Messi's debut for Inter Miami. Some paid thousands for their seats. The team's owners committed well over \$100 million just to have a chance at moments like this.

So far, it looks like money well spent.

From the you-can't-make-this-up department, Messi capped the opening night with his new club by delivering the unforgettable. His magical left foot sent a free kick into the upper left corner of the net in the 94th minute Friday night, giving Inter Miami a 2-1 win over Mexican club Cruz Azul in a Leagues Cup match.

"What I saw was the goal," Messi said in an on-field interview amid the postgame celebration. "I saw the goal. I knew that I had to score."

He makes it sound so easy. Made it look so easy, too.

The game's greatest active player - a seven-time Ballon d'Or winner and a World Cup champion - sent the ball over a wall of four Cruz Azul defenders for the winning goal, unquestionably the greatest moment in Inter Miami's brief history. Fireworks shot into the night sky, and play resumed for roughly a minute before the referee's whistle blew.

"It's a movie that we have seen be-

fore," Inter Miami coach Tata Martino said.

Messi was a showman throughout his debut for his Major League Soccer club.

SOCCER

He waved at fans while he was seated on the bench. Waved at them while he was warming up. Waved at them while he was actually in the game.



Inter Miami forward Lionel Messi (10) controls the ball during the second half of a Leagues Cup soccer match against Cruz Azul in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. (AP)

Hussein wins silver at Asian senior Karate championship

KUALA LUMPUR, July 22, (KUNA): Kuwaiti karateka Mohammad Hussein won the silver medal in the Asian Karate Federation (AFK) Senior Championships, held in Malaysia.

According to AFK on Saturday, Hussein competed against a Japanese karateka in the solo Kata category, adding that the Japanese opponent won the gold medal by a 3.42 to 2.42 while, Omar Al-Qenai also claimed a bronze medal, in the under 75-kg weight.

KARATE

Speaking to KUNA, head of Kuwait Karate Federation Ahmad Al-Thufairi said today's bronze of Al-Qenai and silver of Hussein are the first achievement of Kuwait's national team in this event. Hussein was in good shape, so he could obtain the second position in the individual's contest, he said.

He noted that the Kuwaiti national team participated in the "kumite" competitions, individual combat, with

Noah Daoud, under 55kg weight, Abdullah Shaaban, under 60kg weight, Mohammad Al-Otaibi, under 67kg weight, Youssef Hajja, under 84kg weight and Mohammad Al-Majadi, over 84 kg.

Al-Thufairi hoped that Kuwait's players would gain more medals at the event, which comes to a close on Sunday, tomorrow.

He commended efforts of Kuwait's Ambassador to Malaysia Rashed Al-Saleh, who congratulated Al-Qenai and Hussein for their medals, saying they raised Kuwait's flag.

The tourney is featuring more than 4000 male and female athletes from 31 countries.



Second from right, Kuwait's Mohammad Hussein on the podium with other winners. KUNA photo.

Tadej rules stage 20

Vingegaard virtually assured of Tour win

LE MARKSTEIN, France, July 22, (AP): Tadej Pogacar and Jonas Vingegaard celebrated on the second-to-last day of the Tour de France.

Pogacar pipped the defending champion to take the penultimate stage on Saturday but it won't be enough to stop his great rival from winning the race again.

Vingegaard maintained his huge lead over two-time champion Pogacar and will surely be crowned the Tour winner after Sunday's largely ceremonial stage ends on the Champs-Élysées in Paris.

CYCLING

"We have to be careful not to do anything stupid but, yeah, it's amazing to take my second victory in the Tour de France and I almost cannot believe it," Vingegaard said.

Pogacar, who won in 2020 and 2021, claimed his second stage win in the 110th edition of cycling's most famous race but was unable to make up for Vingegaard's huge advantage built in the Alps. The Danish rider leads by 7 minutes, 29 seconds.

"I really appreciate the battle I had with Tadej," Vingegaard said.

Pogacar had been in outstanding form this year, winning nearly everywhere he raced. But the Slovenian crashed at Liège-Bastogne-Liège in April and needed surgery on a broken wrist. It's hard to say how much that setback impacted his Tour de France hopes.

Saturday's 133.5-kilometer (83-mile) stage from Belfort to the mountain resort of Le Markstein was the last tough test for the riders and the 3,600 meters of climbing took its toll on many of them.

Young Spanish rider Carlos Rodriguez, who still harbored hopes of overtaking Adam Yates to third place, crashed going around a bend at 33 km. Rodriguez got back on his bike but with blood on his face, arm and leg.

American Sepp Kuss also needed medical attention after a bad crash. It was his second of the Tour.